

# MEMOIRS OF SIR WALTER RSCOTT

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MEMORIES OF SIR WALTER SCOTT







From the frontispiece of

James Keene's Autobiography

*James Keene*

Frontispiece

THE SKENE PAPERS

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MEMORIES OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT  
BY JAMES SKENE

EDITED BY BASIL THOMSON

*WITH PORTRAIT*



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## PREFATORY NOTE

Eleven years we now may tell,  
Since we have known each other well ;  
Since, riding side by side, our hand  
First drew the voluntary brand ;  
And sure, through many a varied scene,  
Unkindness never came between.

*Marmion.* Introduction to Canto iv.

JAMES SKENE of Rubislaw, near Aberdeen, was born on the 7th March 1775. His father, a brilliant but erratic young barrister, died the year after his birth, and he was left to the guardianship of his mother, the heiress of the Jacobite Moirs of Stoneywood, a woman of character and eccentricity, who shocked her contemporaries by such extravagances as making her annual journey to Edinburgh on horseback in a scarlet riding-habit. By the early death of his elder brother he inherited Rubislaw at the age of sixteen, and his mother then removed him from the High School at Edinburgh and set him to find his way alone to Hanau in Germany to complete his education—no small feat for a boy of sixteen in the year of the Revolution. Returning from Germany with a fluent knowledge of French and German, and a taste for German literature,

he applied himself to the study of law, and was admitted to the Scottish Bar in 1797. It was his acquaintance with contemporary German literature, as he himself narrates, which procured him an introduction to Sir Walter Scott, just then fired with the spirit of Bürger. The acquaintance soon ripened in the atmosphere of *camaraderie* that enveloped the Edinburgh Light Horse in which they both held commissions. The martial fever that possessed them at this period excited some ridicule among their fellow-advocates.

Skene's tastes were artistic and scientific rather than literary, and Scott, who considered him 'the first amateur draughtsman in Scotland,' had a high opinion of his talent. The pencil sketches and water-colour drawings that adorn the journals of his foreign travels are exquisitely finished, though the etchings he published of the 'Waverley Localities' scarcely do him justice. In the ballad-hunting expeditions in Ettrick Forest, which were an excuse for the wild 'cross-country riding that they both loved, Skene was seldom without his sketch-book.

'As thou with pencil, I with pen,  
The features traced of hill and glen.'

At the peace of 1802 Skene took the road again. Landing at Calais he traversed Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy in leisurely fashion. He was now twenty-seven, and, as he



frankly admits, it was the *Sentimental Journey* that inspired him to keep a journal of his travels, a habit which happily he was never able to shake off.

After exploring Sicily he returned slowly through France, where he had made many friends and acquired a local knowledge which was afterwards turned to account by his friend in *Quentin Durward*.

On his return he fell in love with Jane, the daughter of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo. Before the date of the marriage was fixed, Sir William fell ill, and knowing that his end was near, he sent for Skene and insisted on the marriage being solemnised by his bedside that he might die happy.

‘And such a lot, my Skene, was thine,  
When thou of late wert doomed to twine,  
Just when thy bridal hour was by,  
The cypress with the myrtle tie.’

For the eight years following his marriage in 1806, Skene lived the life of a cultured country gentleman, in Kincardineshire and Edinburgh, paying frequent visits to Scott at Ashestiel, and meeting him daily in Edinburgh. In 1816 he returned to Edinburgh for the education of his children, and here he set himself, with Scott’s help, to reorganise the literary and scientific societies, which had fallen on evil days. As Secretary to the Royal Society and Curator of its Library and Museum under Scott’s presidency,

and as a member of the Antiquarian Society, he became keenly interested in antiquarian research, and later, as Secretary to the Board of Trustees and Manufactures, he did much for the promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. In 1820 he took his family to Aix-en-Provence for a prolonged sojourn, and there was born his seventh child, Felicia, known afterwards as the pioneer of the modern Prison Visitor. Of his other children the best known was his second son, William, Historiographer Royal for Scotland, and author of *Celtic Scotland*, who died in 1892 at the age of eighty-three.

On his return from France, Skene lived in Edinburgh, and from the time of Scott's financial ruin the intimacy between the two men seems to have become closer. It fell naturally to Skene to organise the national memorial to his dead friend. His papers of 1832 are full of letters from subscribers in remote parts of the earth.

His third son, my grandfather, who was quartered at Malta with his regiment, having made a romantic marriage with a daughter of Jacques Rizo-Rangabé, the head of an old Fanariot family in Athens, sold his commission and settled in Greece, and he sent home such a glowing picture of the climate that Skene set out with his whole family overland to pay him a visit. Under the glamour of his first few weeks in that enchanted country, he bought a considerable property and built a villa in which he lived for nearly eight years. Two of his daughters

married in the country. His journal and sketches of that period are of the highest interest. It was perhaps the happiest time of his life, but at length an acute nostalgia carried him back to England, and in 1844 he settled permanently at Frewen Hall, near Oxford, where he died in 1864, in his ninetieth year, his wife having preceded him by a few months.

He was a man of much industry and many accomplishments. He spoke French, German, and Italian fluently, and had more than a superficial knowledge of the science of his time. His writings fill many volumes of manuscript, and yet so great was his modesty that, beyond a few papers to the journals of scientific societies and a volume of etchings, he published nothing. His literary bent was too weak a plant to grow up under the shadow of a great tree. Had Scott belonged to another generation it is possible that Skene's wide experience and his keen observation would have brought him some measure of literary fame. This volume of recollections and letters was written for the purpose of preserving among his descendants the memory of his intimacy with Scott. He placed it freely at Lockhart's disposal, but he seems to have felt, and to have impressed the feeling on his sons, that to publish it without the permission of his dead friend would be an act of impropriety. The MS. was lent by his daughter to Mr. David Douglas when the famous journal was going through the press, and hence it comes that several

of the letters have already appeared in print. They are reprinted here in their proper place.

These papers, and many other unpublished journals and MSS., have passed into the hands of my cousin, Mr. Maurice Skene-Tytler, the grandson of his eldest son, who has kindly permitted me to publish them. I have to thank my uncle, Mr. Felix Skene, for many useful suggestions.

A few letters addressed to Mrs. Skene are included in this volume. Her friendship with Scott seems to have been of the formal and conventional order, except in one particular. Though Mrs. Skene makes no allusion to her sister-in-law, Green Mantle, nor to the following episode, it fell to her in 1827, when poor Green Mantle was dead, to accompany Sir Walter on his first visit to the mother of his early love, whom he had not seen for more than thirty years. Lady Jane Stuart was then seventy-four. Her letter inviting Scott to the interview contained the following passage: 'Not the mother who bore you followed you more anxiously (though secretly) with her blessing than I! Age has tales to tell and sorrows to unfold.'<sup>1</sup> All that Mrs. Skene would ever say of this interview, even to members of her own family, was that a very painful scene occurred, and that she thought it probable that Scott wrote the lines 'To Time, by his Early Favourite,' on returning from the visit.

It is a little difficult to fix the exact place that

<sup>1</sup> *Journal*, note to p. 55, vol. ii.

Skene held in Scott's intimacy. On the one side we have the fact that he was not among the six or eight persons admitted to the secret of the authorship of *Waverley*, and Scott's reference to him in the journal of January 1826<sup>1</sup> does not imply a very close intimacy, but a fortnight later, when Scott was staggering under the blow of financial ruin, it was to 'good Samaritan Skene' that he turned for comfort. On the other hand, had Skene not been an intimate, Scott would have taken more trouble about his letters to him—as he did, for instance, in those he wrote to Lady Louisa Stuart, Sir Alexander Young, and others of his acquaintance, nor would he have sent to him first for comfort in his distress. The friendship of the two men had, in fact, two phases. In their early manhood Skene was the friend of Scott's open-air life, of the Edinburgh Cavalry, of the exploratory rides into the Border moorland, of the otter hunts and the fish-spearing, and he touched the intellectual life only in his archæological studies and in the glimpses he was able to give of the life and thought of foreign countries which suggested new fields of romance.

<sup>1</sup> 'Mr. and Mrs. Skene, my excellent friends, came to us from Edinburgh. Skene, distinguished for his attainments as a draughtsman, and for his highly gentlemanlike feeling and character, is Laird of Rubislaw, near Aberdeen. Having had an elder brother, his education was somewhat neglected in early life, against which disadvantage he made a most gallant (fight), exerting himself much to obtain those accomplishments which he has since possessed. Of late he has given himself much to the study of Antiquities.

' . . . They bring so much old-fashioned kindness and good-humour with them, besides the recollections of other times, that they are most welcome guests.'—*Journal*, vol. i. p. 75.

As a critic he was too easily pleased to be of use, and it was to Morritt and Erskine that Scott turned when he needed friendly criticism. From 1798 to 1826 they were bound together by comradeship and community of tastes and political opinions. But Skene's chivalrous affection after the financial disaster of 1826 seems to have brought the two men into a closer relationship, which, as these letters show, endured until the clouds had settled down upon Scott's intellect. In one of the lucid intervals of the last illness, Skene was the first friend for whom the dying man inquired, and it seemed natural to the family to choose him as a trustee to select the relics of the dead which were to be preserved at Abbotsford. In Scott's intimacy, therefore, Skene may be said to have come next below Clerk, Erskine, and Morritt.

But to Skene's devotion to Scott no bounds were set. His deep admiration of his genius never descended to foolish adulation; his respect for his character was the respect of one strong man for another. How poignantly Skene felt his loss may be judged by the fact, unrecorded in his minute account of the funeral, that he fell down in a fainting fit beside the open grave at Dryburgh.

His journal of the thirty-three years that remained to him are filled with recollections of his dead friend, and a few days before his death, when, despite his ninety years, his memory and intelligence seemed as bright as ever, his daughter found him one autumn evening 'almost trans-

figured by an expression of the most radiant delight.' 'The moment I came in,' she wrote, 'he turned to me and told me that he had just experienced an inexpressible joy; he had just seen dear Scott again! He had walked into the room quite suddenly, and told him that he had come from a very long distance to visit him. Then my father described his unchanged appearance, and how he had sat down on the other side of the hearth. "It has been such a joyful meeting, but dear Scott did not stay very long." This account was so detailed and clear that I almost felt as if I had myself seen what he described.'

B. T.

LONDON, *October* 1909.





## ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF JAMES SKENE, . . . *Frontispiece*

From the Picture by Sir HENRY RAEBURN, R.A.

FACSIMILE OF LETTER OF 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

1823, . . . . . *facing p. 108*



# MEMORIES OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

BY JAMES SKENE

THE removal from life of my early and much-valued friend has at length closed to me the source of long and habitual enjoyment, leaving to memory alone all the traces of our intercourse while they are suffered to last; but it has stamped in a manner with the value of relics that portion which chanced to have been epistolary. And as under that sacred character I feel their claim to regard, however much they may be of a merely private, careless, and familiar class, I desire to have them collected into a volume for their security, and also for the satisfaction I anticipate in revising them, and in adding such notes relating to the circumstances they may refer to as recent memory can yet supply.

I may perhaps be excused for feeling some degree of pride in wishing to transmit in safety to my family the testimony borne by these letters, from an early period down to the termination of the life of so illustrious a man as Sir Walter Scott, of the friendship which existed between us. I have reason to think that the last letter in the

series which he wrote to me from Italy was probably the last which the state of his health permitted him to write, as the fatal complaint which arrested his faculties occurred so soon afterwards, in the course of the journey in which he was then engaged. His extreme anxiety to hasten the course of his homeward progress showed that he had foreseen the fate which did at length overtake him, while journeying by the Rhine to Holland.

My first acquaintance with Sir Walter Scott arose from the circumstance of my having at an early period of my life acquired some knowledge of the German language, and having thus anticipated the time when a taste for it began to gain ground in this country. Until the close of the last century the literature of Germany was but little known in Scotland, where the idea prevailed that it contained few treasures worth knowing, and that it was chiefly confined to monkish chronicles, and such-like dry annals of the numerous small states and dependencies into which the country was subdivided, with ponderous tomes of commentators on Law, Theology, and the Classics, and treatises on Alchemy and the Occult Sciences. But about this time the first works of Schiller and Klopstock had begun to be noticed, and some of the wild ballads or *Volkslieder* of Bürger having fallen into Scott's hands, he forthwith set himself to work to master the idiom, and even to translate some of them into English. The

chivalrous and romantic character of most of these legendary tales chimed in with the bent and taste of Sir Walter's mind, and having somewhat familiarised himself with the structure of the language by putting the play of *Götz von Berlichingen* into an English dress, he made a very successful translation of *Lenore* and some of the other ballads. Books of this class, however, were but rarely to be met with in the country at that period, and in his quest for a supply to feed the craving for German romance that seized him, Sir Walter learned that I had recently returned from a several years' residence at school in Germany, and that I had brought a collection of the best German authors along with me, which he, of course, became desirous to obtain access to. Accordingly, our mutual friend, Mrs. Edmonston of Newton, waited upon me to introduce Sir Walter in the year 1794. Among his intimate acquaintances Scott had always been a general favourite on account of his unaffected, cheerful, and kindly habits, and was even then a person in some request for his convivial habits and entertaining conversation, but to me, who had for some years been abroad, he was as unknown in name as in character. However, the objects of his research were there before him in a goodly range of German volumes, comprehending the works of most of the German authors then in repute; they soon fixed his attention, and became the subject of our conversation, and when I intimated to him that the

collection was altogether at his service, a cordial shake of the hand which accompanied his thanks seemed to seal that bond, which rose from this first introduction to an intimacy and friendship uninterrupted for forty years, and even still on the increase when the close of his life dissolved that bond of affection which had constituted one of the chief charms of mine.

Without the vanity to suppose that in the early period of our acquaintance my resources of conversation could in any respect approach the quality of those which I soon discovered in Scott, yet the opportunities of travel I happened so early to have enjoyed, not then so common as they have since become, afforded me the means of supplying matter of some entertainment to him and some information of that description which I have noticed that Scott throughout life was always particularly desirous to acquire—a taste which, in fact, appears reflected throughout his works.

The peculiarities of foreign countries, the habits of the people, the striking features of scenery, and, above all, the traditions, songs of the people, and legendary tales always supplied an ample and agreeable theme, and to such subjects of interest was joined the influence of similarity of pursuits in several important respects, for, although he was by several years my senior in life, I was preparing to join him at the Scottish Bar, and we soon afterwards became also associates in Court.

Residing for the first years of our acquaintance in the immediate neighbourhood of each other, in South Castle Street, so as to be in the daily habit of meeting while in town, and often passing a considerable portion of the summer together in the country in some rambling excursion, we had little opportunity for correspondence by letter, beyond such casual notes as are seldom preserved, when nothing has as yet occurred to render the autograph of the writer of value. Accordingly the letters from Sir Walter Scott which I happen to have preserved are of a considerably later period, when his rising name had begun to stamp a value on every trifle which proceeded from his pen, but at the same time I cannot take blame for having neglected at any time the communications of a friend I valued so much, but in fact, the intervals of separation had during a considerable space been so few and short as to produce small need of correspondence betwixt us.

In the explanatory notes which I intend occasionally to add to the following series of letters, I am far from proposing any attempt to picture the mind of my late lamented friend. My evidence bears on one point especially, that of his familiar moments. Although I have seen him much in the intercourse of general society, and often in company where he was naturally called upon to observe more ceremony, yet the unpretending and guileless simplicity of his nature seemed altogether unsusceptible of influence from those circumstances

which are usually found more or less to affect the manners of most people. With Sir Walter the same peculiar characteristics prevailed whatever might be the situation in which he was placed. Even under the scourge of protracted sickness and pain, in family distress and misfortune, exposed to those irritating trifles by which the equilibrium of temper is often more effectually spoiled than by severer calamities, the same elevation of soul was conspicuous throughout; his mind seemed to move in a sphere incapable of descending; the amiable and the good, the higher and more dignified attributes of our nature alone seemed to bound his view. With a brilliancy of ideas that commanded every phase of imagination, even the most common thoughts acquired an embellishment, a degree of beauty, and at the same time a simplicity and playfulness which was surprising. He did not so much describe, as by the vivacity of his conception evoke the very presence of what he described; of this feature his writings bear the lasting portrait, and his usual conversation was equally characterised by it. A remarkable instance recurs to my memory, which I may mention now if only to preserve my consistency by breaking off from an analysis of his character, which in spite of my determination to the contrary I have insensibly fallen into.

In one of our frequent walks to the pier of Leith, where the freshness of the sea-breeze was a strong temptation to those accustomed to pass a



few of the morning hours within the close and impure atmosphere of the Court of Session, I happened to meet with the master of a vessel in which I had sailed in the Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> Our mutual recognition was cordial, as the grasp of the seaman's hard fist showed. It was some years since we had been shipmates; he had visited almost every quarter of the globe, but he shook his head and looked serious when he came to mention his last trip. He had commanded a whaler, and having been for weeks exposed to great stress of weather in the polar regions, the voyage finally terminated in the total loss of his vessel with most of her equipage in the course of a dark, tempestuous night. When the ship was thrown on her beam ends, my friend was washed overboard, and in his struggles to keep himself above water he got hold of a piece of ice on the top of which he succeeded at length in raising himself. 'And there I was, sir, on a cursed dark, dirty night, squatted on a round lump of floating ice, for all the world like a tea-table adrift in the middle of a stormy sea, without being able to see whether there was any hope within sight, and having enough to do to hold on, cold as my seat was, with sometimes one end of me in the water and sometimes the other, as the ill-fashioned crank thing kept whirling and twirling about all night. However, praised be God, daylight had not been long in when a boat's crew on the look-out hove in

<sup>1</sup> From Leghorn to Civit  Vecchia.

sight, and taking me for a basking seal, and, maybe, I was not unlike that same, up they came of themselves, for neither voice nor hand had I to signal them, and if they lost their blubber, faith, sir, they did get a willing prize on board. So, after just a little bit gliff of a prayer for the mercy that sent them to my help, I soon came to myself again, and now that I am landed safe and sound, I am walking about, ye see. like a gentleman, till I get some new craft to try the trade again.'

Sir Walter, who was leaning on my arm during this narrative, had not taken any share in the dialogue, and kept gazing to seaward with his usual heavy, absorbed expression, and only joined in wishing the seaman better success in his next trip as we parted. However, the detail had by no means escaped his notice, but dropping into the fertile soil of his mind, speedily yielded fruit quite characteristic of his habits. We happened that evening to dine in company together. I was not near Sir Walter at table, but in the course of the evening my attention was called to listen to a narrative with which he was entertaining those around him, and exciting as usual the eager interest of his hearers. I had not heard the beginning of the story, but I soon perceived that a shipwreck was the theme, which he described with all the vivid touches of his fancy, marshalling the incidents and striking features of the situations with a degree of dexterity that seemed to bring all the horrors of a polar storm home to

every one's mind ; and although it occurred to me that our rencontre in the morning with the shipwrecked whaling captain might have recalled a similar story to his recollection, it was not until he came to mention the 'tea-table of ice' that I recognised the identity of my friend's tale, which had luxuriated to such an extent in the fertile soil of the poet's imagination, as to have left the original germ in comparative insignificance. He cast a glance towards me at the close, and observed with a significant nod, 'You see that you did not hear one-half of that honest seaman's story this morning.' It was such slender hints, which in the common intercourse of life must have hourly dropped on the soil of his retentive memory, that fed the exuberance of Sir Walter's invention, and supplied the seemingly inexhaustible stream of fancy, from which he drew forth at pleasure the groundwork of his romances.

The power of agreeable conversation with most persons who have the good fortune to possess it requires the aid of favourable circumstances to draw it forth, but that was not the case with Sir Walter. His peculiar talent never seemed to be checked by what might have been considered the most hopeless theme, or the most unpromising company. Every class and character seemed to him a study which he delighted to bring out in its everyday dress by the easy plan of his own conversation, and he seemed to succeed with all,

from the highest to the lowest; for it was my fortune to have seen him in company of all kinds, even in that of many of the most remarkable persons of the age, and I have never seen his powers of conversation fail to excite a corresponding impression, except in one instance, where, conscious of his fruitless efforts, he returned repeatedly to the attack, but in vain; his very best jokes, and most amusing sallies fell powerless to the ground before the prim countenance and most imperturbable propriety of a governess. He fairly gave up the attempt, and observed that she was the best specimen he had ever seen of a ‘timber governess.’

The following letter, written in consequence of having been asked by Mr. Lockhart to give him a few notes relating to Sir Walter Scott’s connection with the Volunteer Cavalry, with a view to the life he was writing, will serve as a sketch of our intercourse during the ten years from 1798 to 1808.

EDINBURGH, *28th July 1834.*

MY DEAR LOCKHART,—You desired me to send you any recollections I might retain of that period of our late friend’s life in which he joined the ranks of the Edinburgh Cavalry, that of the latter years of the last century and those towards the commencement of the present. It is a period profuse enough in recollections delightful to myself as recalling a sort of after-taste of pleasures long gone by, which I fear, however, would appear too insipid to warrant my inflicting on you the task

of reading them, particularly as I find, upon looking to my epistolary relics, they are necessarily but scanty at that time, as Sir Walter's pursuits and my own led us so much in the same course that for a good many years we were seldom separated, even for a whole day when in town, and when even in the summer recess, either at Ashestiel or engaged in frequent border excursions of some extent and duration on horseback, we were so much together as to leave little occasion for epistolary intercourse beyond the interchange of casual notes, of which the proportion that have been accidentally preserved, though no doubt of value to me as serving to recall the circumstances connected with them, could not otherwise be made serviceable. But from the period of my retirement to the country in 1808 our correspondence assumed a more regular character, and continued without intermission until so short a time prior to the last attack of the fatal malady when on his homeward journey through Italy, that I am inclined to think that the last letter I received from him must have been among the last he was ever permitted to write. It is long, of two sheets, full of interest, and partaking of his usual easy, cheerful style, although not without an ominous presentiment of the approaching event; it is written with a more unsteady hand than usual, and without either date or superscription, owing apparently to the accident of finding when he had reached the last page that he had inadvertently written upon a sheet of paper on which he had begun a letter as to his literary occupations of the time, intended, I presume, for Mr. Cadell. He accordingly finished abruptly, observing that I would perceive he had made a mistake. I have sent a copy of the letter to my daughter, which I mentioned to you, as you might

consider it interesting, but as you said that you had not much occasion for letters, I have merely added another one from Sir Walter, in which he desires me to communicate to the Royal Society that portion which might afford them some entertainment, but as I merely read it without giving the Society the means of making use of it, I thought you might perhaps wish to have it.

As to Sir Walter's dragonades, you are aware that the crisis when we were called upon to assume the sabre was one of extraordinary and very general excitement, and the cause the threatened invasion of the country, when its army and navy were at a distance struggling in every quarter of the Globe, our shores consequently defenceless, and treason hatching throughout the kingdom. It was exactly such an one as could not fail to rouse the patriotic spirit and chivalrous propensities of our friend to a degree of fervour which made him the soul of our association. The London Light Horse had set the example, but in truth it was to Sir Walter's zeal that the mounted volunteers of Scotland, which soon after became so very numerous, owe their origin. Unable by reason of his lameness to serve amongst his friends on foot, he had nothing for it but to awake the spirit of the moss-trooper with which he readily inspired all those who possessed the means of substituting the sabre for the musket. No fatigue seemed too much for him, and notwithstanding his infirmity, he had a remarkably firm seat on horseback, and on all occasions a fearless one. His post as Quartermaster, purposely selected for him on that account, spared him the rougher usage in the ranks, but his ardour and animation seemed to sustain the enthusiasm of the whole corps, and upon all occasions his *mot-à-rire*, as the French term it, kept up a degree of good-humour

and relish for the service in all, without which the fatigue and privations of long daily drills would not easily have been submitted to. The order to 'stand at ease' was the signal for the Quartermaster to lead the squadron to merriment. Every eye instinctively turned upon those occasions to 'Earl Walter,' as he was familiarly called by his associates of that date, and his ready joke seldom failed to raise the ready laugh.

I recollect that upon one of these occasions, after a pretty severe drill, the men were dismounted on the sands and standing at ease in front of their horses; some joke of Sir Walter's raised a laugh among a party that was standing around him so loud and so sudden, that it startled the horses, who, finding themselves at liberty, with one accord scampered off in all directions, oversetting various troopers in their dispersion. They were seen galloping on the distant sands, in emulation of each other, kicking and fighting and occasionally disburdening themselves of their accoutrements, while one or two were descried in the water swimming to Inchkeith on the opposite coast of Fife to the no small alarm of their owners. The trumpet-call brought back the better disciplined to their ranks and ultimately induced even the navigators to return, after the trumpeters had gone in, saddle deep, to charm them back to their duty. The various dilemmas and disagreements which this escapade occasioned you may well suppose afforded a fertile theme of merriment for the descriptive powers of our friend. But it was at our daily mess (for the whole squadron dined together) that the habitual good-humour of the Quartermaster reigned supreme. Not that he was in any respect deficient in the knowledge of a strict observance of the regular duties of the corps, for in fact he took unbounded delight in its

progress and proficiency, taking his full share, which his very powerful frame of body and zeal in the cause enabled him to do. I send you a copy of the Troop Book, by which you will perceive that the duties of Paymaster and Secretary were at first consigned to the Quartermaster, but this was soon found burdensome, and Mr. Colin Mackenzie became Paymaster, Sir Walter remaining Quartermaster till the dissolution of the corps upon the termination of the war. He composed a troop song, which was much sung and relished by those for whom it was intended. It was set to the music of the German Kriegslied, *Der Abschiedstag ist da*, and, when sung at mess, in imitation of the dirk songs of the Gael, every trooper stood up and unsheathed his sabre, for enthusiasm was the order of the day, and although the remembrance of such demonstrations may now call forth a smile when everything allied to patriotism and the feelings it inspires stinks in the nostrils of our degenerate race, yet at that period it had its effect in sustaining a spirit of devotion to the cause, and to the honour of the country, which I fear we shall never again see.

During one period of our service there was daily expectation (or apprehension if you choose) of the enemy attempting a landing at Aberlady Bay, from a hint having transpired that it was their intention to make simultaneous attempts of the same kind on the coasts of Scotland, Kent, and Norfolk. At this juncture a false alarm was given by a mistaken signal, which, however, having set all the beacons on blaze, showed the alacrity of the volunteer troopers, who poured into Edinburgh in the course of the day from sixty miles off. Sir Walter had a good story of a renegade tailor of Selkirk upon this occasion, which you have doubtless heard him narrate. I



happened to be in Fife with Sir William Rae and another trooper, when discovering the long-looked for signal as evening set in, we lost no time in embarking ourselves and our chargers, and after being buffeted about during the whole of a dark and boisterous night, we landed early in the morning and galloped off to the rendezvous of the corps. Learning the mistake, we put up our horses and proceeded to breakfast with Sir Walter and to laugh over our exploits. But if the foreign enemy failed, there was no want of disaffection at home to excite disturbances, which often kept us under arms both day and night. Upon one occasion we were three-and-twenty hours in our saddles without relief. ‘L’affaire du Cross Causeway’ was one of these, which you recollect Sir Walter jocularly availed himself of when in Paris he happened to be questioned by a General Officer<sup>1</sup> as to the occasions of service he had seen. When engaged on that duty notice reached the party of an attack on Moredun Mill. Twenty men were accordingly despatched under my command as Cornet and the Quartermaster. It was midnight before we reached the spot, and the rioters had taken to their heels. We pursued them to Gilmerton where they took shelter in the coal-pits, a somewhat puzzling field for cavalry to act in, after having previously defended a large house at the entrance of the village which has ever since been called by the name of the ‘Man of War.’ A dismounted party with Sir Walter gained access, when they were resisted by a band of Amazons, as the men had for safety descended the adjoining coal-pits. A cart was procured, into which half a dozen of the most outrageous of the warrior dames were packed and placed in charge of Spottiswood, to the great amusement of the

<sup>1</sup> The Czar.

rest of the party on both sides. After a time the ladies were released, and much was the merriment that the Quartermaster made out of the incidents of this amusing night attack. When in quarters Sir Walter was generally billeted in the house of a cousin of his own, whose name I have forgotten, residing between Musselburgh Mill and the manse of old Dr. Carlyle, who was known as a most venerable-looking patriarch, and who had obtained the name of Jupiter from having sat to Hamilton, the history painter, in the character of the Olympian god for one of that artist's compositions. A good deal of *Marmion* was composed in this house, and one whole Canto, I think the Fifth, on the drill ground at Portobello Sands, where they assembled at five o'clock in the morning, and where, during our evolutions, Sir Walter was often seen dodging up and down on his black gelding at the very edge of the sea in complete abstraction. He used to join me in the rear of the squadron when returning from exercises, and recite what he had been composing. I was perhaps indebted for this entertainment to the circumstance of his having engaged me to sketch some appropriate pencil designs for a copy of the forthcoming poem, intended to be presented to Queen Caroline.

Apropos of *Marmion*. I was sorry to observe a mistake in the notes to the new edition with reference to a verse which is there said to allude to Lord Medwyn, with whom at that time Sir Walter was not even acquainted, and who bore in his character no feature analogous to the expressions of the lines, whereas Sir William Forbes was his early and much-loved friend, his brother trooper, and one of those intimates to whom that Canto especially refers.

There was at this time a volunteer garrison in

Edinburgh of about eight thousand men, besides Militia, under the command of Earl Moira, who, being fond of parade, had them often brigaded in a body for various purposes of field exercise, and many were the amusing occurrences which took place during the sham battles occasionally got up. Leith was more than once occupied by one division and defended against the assault by the other, and a grand action was fought in consequence on the links, which nearly proved disastrous from the Highland regiment absolutely refusing to be beat, which according to the programme of the battle was intended. They were to have yielded to a desperate charge of the cavalry. We sustained the fusillade and prepared to break their lines, but Donald was obdurate and kept firm with bayonets determinedly levelled. We were obliged to wheel off, and charge again. The wrath of Murray Macgregor, who commanded them, could be contained no longer. With a great oath he shouted to his men 'Open the fieldpieces upon them'! (they had three or four on each flank). He paid no sort of attention to Lord Moira's aides-de-camp, who were curvetting in the rear of his line, swearing at them that they knew nothing of Highlanders if they thought that they could yield, so that there was nothing for it but to change the intended issue of the battle. Sir Walter was delighted with this trait of character. Craigmillar Castle was stormed upon another occasion; every variety of position was taken up throughout the neighbourhood of the city, and for a time there was a positive military craze, in the infliction of which upon so many otherwise sober citizens I do consider our friend as having been mainly instrumental. You will not doubt this when you recollect the tone he gave to the feelings and conduct of all classes at the time of the visit to

Edinburgh of King George IV. It was quite common to see the advocate's gown thrown over the military uniform at the bar of the Court of Session; tradesmen in arms behind their counters, measuring forth yards of ribbon; chairmen in belted plaids and claymores hobbling along with their sedans, and the able-bodied of all ranks and degrees using the soldier's dress fully more than that of the civilian. It was calculated that throughout Great Britain a volunteer army of not less than three hundred thousand men was banded for the defence of the kingdom, independent of the Militia. Query, How many would the standard of our present rulers bring into the field? They have had the merit of effectually stifling that old prestige which was capable of calling forth the noblest feelings and arming every hand in support of the country's cause.

I am somewhat doubtful if your patience has been sufficient to bring you thus far, and if it has, probably not without denouncing my letter as intolerably prosy, and I feel therefore that it is time to release you from the infliction, particularly as you must have heard much and more to the purpose from the life of Sir Walter himself of the recollections of those days when he used to taunt us with the old French song:

‘Dragons pour boire,  
L'on dit que vous avez renom,  
Mais pour combattre  
L'on dit que non.’

Your inquiries, if I mistake not, were merely confined to that subject, so that with best regards to Mrs. Lockhart, I remain, most faithfully yours,

JAMES SKENE.

JOHN G. LOCKHART, Esq.

In mentioning that a considerable part of *Marmion* was composed while Sir Walter was quartered as a dragoon at Musselburgh, I omitted to notice what always appeared to me one of the most remarkable instances of the facility of versification proceeding from the intuitive power of his mind, and not from great practice in that kind of composition, as it sometimes is with others. The first time the regiment was in quarters, when accidents among the troops were frequent, Sir Walter did not escape his share, and was confined to his room for three days in consequence of a kick or some such misadventure, and the produce of these three days' confinement was the composition of the three first Cantos of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, his first great poetical work, in the state in which they were published. I had occasion once or twice to see him while thus engaged, but his associates being sufficiently occupied with their military tasks, he was little disturbed or interrupted.

From the reason mentioned in the foregoing letter, he was in the practice while composing *Marmion* to read it to me in the proof-sheets. In doing so upon one occasion, he suddenly stopped at a passage, saying 'I don't like this,' and sitting down at my table he drew his pen through a portion of it, and replaced it by a considerable number of lines written as rapidly and apparently as easily as one would write a note. The passage as

reformed was sent to the press, but I regret now having omitted to note at the time which it was.

LONDON, 9th February 1834.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have read with the greatest delight your reminiscences of the cavalry period. They place the man and all his friends completely in one's view, and are equipped with a grace which he himself, I think, would not have surpassed. I am sorry to bother you, but you really would confer a most important favour on me, and I even venture to say on many thousands besides and after us, by setting down in a similar way any anecdotes, etc., that may suggest themselves to your recollection with respect to *other periods*; more particularly those early tours performed in company with Sir Walter which you allude to in the letter I have received, and by the bye you mistook me in supposing that I was indifferent as to having copies of his letters to you, *i.e.* of such parts of them as *you* might deem fit to transmit to me. Quite the contrary. I know his letters to you must have a value totally beyond the mass that he addressed to mere acquaintances. I have seventy-two to Morritt, every sentence of which is precious—perhaps as many to one fine lady, the whole whereof would hardly furnish one extract—Ever yours most truly,

J. G. LOCKHART.

LONDON, 27th February 1834.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have again to thank you for a most interesting and valuable contribution to the Memoir of our dear friend. I am afraid to trespass on your great goodness, but I assure you I think by continuing your reminiscences you

will be doing a most important service to his memory as well as to the world at large. If William Clerk would speak out as you have done and will, I hope, do still further, and thus throw light which he alone can now do on Sir Walter in the period of his *studies*, I believe I should have little left to desire. You have already filled up what was to me almost a blank. Sophia begs her love to Mrs. Skene.—Ever faithfully yours,

J. G. LOCKHART.

The two following notes have reference to a project which my friends had probably induced him to entertain, but to which I never felt cordially disposed to concur, that of having a series of my foreign drawings engraved and published. For this purpose a few of them had been sent to London for the inspection of the Rev. Edward Forster, a friend of Sir Walter, engaged in literary pursuits, and particularly conversant with works in the line of the Fine Arts. He was pleased with the drawings, and some of them were engraved upon trial, but it afterwards appeared that they could not be executed within such an amount of expense and risk as it would not have been prudent to encounter, and accordingly the intention was for the time abandoned. And although in after years, when the taste for publications of that class had become a little more prevalent, Sir Walter frequently recurred to the idea, and with a view to its success was willing to add the now effective aid of his pen, it was never put into practice.

*April 1805.*

DEAR SKENE,—The enclosed arrived yesterday. I think you had better, to save time, etc., answer it yourself. Mr. F.'s address is Rev. Edward Forster, South Audley Street, Berkeley Square. Adam Ferguson came yesterday opportunely to supply in part the blank your departure made in our fireside circle. He is just setting off, so no more, except that we hope to hear of your speedy return to Ashestiel.—Yours truly,

W. S.

*Sunday Night, 21st April 1805.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I write now merely relative to the drawings of Mr. Skene. I have put one in hand, and as soon as finished I will forward a proof; but it has struck me since that he will be laying out a great deal of money unnecessarily from the large size of the plates, as I think the whole effect might be produced in such a size as I now enclose, and it would save one-third of the expense at least. Besides, they would form a better-sized work, as they are of similar form to many already published, and would therefore assort with others, no small motive to book-fanciers that they will class and stand in a shelf together. However, I will obey in all things. By the bye I should like Mr. Skene to see the enclosed and tell me how he likes the style of its etching. I think well of some of it, very well indeed. When also would he want any number done? I hope to hear from you soon upon the subject of my last letter. I have only to add that I do not think Ballantyne has yet got a proper idea of library printing.

I do not think him quite so correct a printer as you do; I have had lately some sad complaints to



make to him. For the large paper I should prefer Imperial to Royal, and the booksellers are getting very much into that size for large paper books.—In haste, believe me, very truly yours,  
E. FORSTER.

ASHESTIEL, 23rd July 1805.

DEAR SKENE,—I enclose you what Forster calls and I think a poor impression of the drawing. The background seems almost effaced, and the cows in the front look like rabbits. I think, however, the manner, independent of the execution, conveys some notion of your style.

I presume this will find you wandering among the Highlands, and will be happy to hear from you both how you were entertained, and what is to be said about the etching. Forster says he is to write me further particulars. I hope he will send me a better sample of his friends' labours. We are all here as idle as usual, only I have prepared a second edition of the *Lay*, 1500 strong, moved thereunto by the faith, hope and charity of the London booksellers. Comps. to Mr. Greenough. Charlotte sends you kind respects.—Believe me, ever, dear Baron, yours sincerely,

WALTER SCOTT.

Baron was a familiar appellation which Sir Walter was long in use of giving me, arising from an anecdote which is not worth while to be mentioned. In the same manner he himself for many other years received no other name from his intimate friends than that of ‘Earl Walter.’

The subject of the next letter is Mr. Campbell, who published *Albin's Anthology*, and *Travels in*

*Scotland* with plates of remarkable scenery. He was a person of some accomplishments and talent, but blundering and remarkably injudicious in his proceedings. Sir Walter was very kind to him, as in fact he stood much in need of assistance. He employed him occasionally to copy and arrange papers, and any little matters of that kind, until he found that the blunders he made and awkward dilemmas which he sometimes created, rendered it unprofitable to rely upon him. And I have often been surprised at the good temper [with] which Sir Walter received his apologies for mistakes which often produced much inconvenience. Death soon interposed to remove the poor Anthologist from giving further trouble.

CASTLE STREET, 3rd August 1805.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Mr. Alexander Campbell, drawing-master, is upon an expedition through your glens, and has begged from me a card to you as a brother of the brush. He is a very good-natured man whom fortune has pleased to deal rather hardly with. He is, moreover, a little flighty, which you must brave for a day for the sake of his good-nature and misfortunes. Or if he is more *bore* than is permissible, pray set down the overplus to value in accmpt with your truly faithful,

WALTER SCOTT.

The journey alluded to in the next letter was one which I had undertaken in company with my friend George Bellace Greenough, Esq., at that time President of the Geological Society of Lon-

don, and formerly my travelling companion in Sicily and some other countries. The Hebrides were the scene of our rambles, and geology the object, for which purpose we had obtained the use of one of the Excise cutters, the *Melville Castle*, commanded by Captain Beatson. We visited almost all the islands, and landed on many points of the mainland both of Scotland and Ireland wherever any object of interest existed to attract us, or any family lived to whom we desired to pay our respects, so that the whole summer was agreeably consumed in the excursion, which we concluded by visiting the northern counties of Scotland.

ASHESTIEL, 25th August [1805].

DEAR SKENE,—I lately forwarded you an etching which I hope came safe to hand, though I have heard nothing of it since. But I presume your motions in the Hebrides have been too uncertain to admit of much correspondence. In this persuasion, as you know the great value of my time in this place and season, I will employ no more of it than is necessary to forward the enclosed. All our little household are in usual health, and beg to be kindly remembered to you, and I am always, dear Skene, truly yours,

W. SCOTT.

We hope to see you soon after your return.

The following was written on the occasion of my approaching marriage, which had for some time been retarded by the illness of my future father-in-law, the late Sir William Forbes of

Pitsligo, to whose estimable character Sir Walter alludes in this letter, and also in the Introduction to the Fourth Canto of *Marmion*, which he had done me the unexpected honour of addressing to me. I well remember the ravages left by the storm and flood described in this letter; the ford at Ashestiel, which was never a good one, remained for some time very perilous. Sir Walter was himself one of the first to attempt it, on his favourite black horse, Captain, who had scarcely entered the river before he plunged out of his depth and had to swim to the other side with his burden, who in spite of his lameness kept his seat manfully. A cart in which there was a new kitchen range or grate was upset in the ford; the cart and horse were got out, but the grate remained to do duty for some time as a horse trap, and certainly in the most unsuitable place that could well be imagined for a kitchen grate. It afforded, however, the subject of many jokes at Ashestiel, when Lady Scott complained of the imperfections of her kitchen.

ASHESTIEL, Monday, 11th August 1806.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I am favoured with your letter giving me an account of the transactions of the Meeting of Officers relating to our corps, which is such as I expected and indeed wished. I should have been sorry that the *pet* had had the least share in our breaking up, having seen so little of it in the Troop while embodied. I wish I could promise to add to your convenience by accommodating the boarder, but our grass has been so scanty

that, upon consulting with James and Mr. Laidlaw, they both agree we could not do him justice. I have indeed cut grass for the horses in the house, but that you know requires exercise, and I have no one to whom I could trust your horse when Peter is out of the way, which must sometimes happen. I have plenty of forage for the winter, and should it then continue to be an accommodation to you, I will gladly take care of Billie as usual.

I am truly sorry for Sir William's bad health, both as a friend and as one of the most estimable characters in Scotland. I also feel for your situation, which is an unpleasant one in its way, but I hope the worthy Bart.'s health will soon admit of execution being done on Cawdor. If in the interim you could find a moment to spend here, you know the way, and the ford is where it was; which by the way is more than I expected, after Saturday last, which was the most dreadful storm of thunder and lightning I ever witnessed. The lightning broke repeatedly in our immediate vicinity, *i.e.* betwixt us and the Peel Wood. Charlotte resolved to die in bed like a good Christian, the servants thought it was the preface to the end of the world, and I was the only person that maintained my character for stoicism, which I assure you was some merit, as I had no doubt that we were in real danger. It was accompanied with a flood so tremendous that I would have given five pounds you had been here to make a sketch of it. The little Glenkinnen brook was unpassable for all the next day, and indeed I have been obliged to send all hands to repair the ford, which was converted into a deep pool.

Will you slip into my book-room, and on the ground shelves next the window you will see some volumes of the *Biographia Britannica*.

Will you give that containing the article 'Burnet, Gilbert, D.D.' to our old housekeeper, and tell her to send it out to Ashestiel with the basket which she will receive by the carrier, and which is to return this week. Also to clap in parcels, letters, etc. Excuse, my dear Skene, this trouble from,  
yours truly, WALTER SCOTT.

Having gone to reside in Aberdeenshire in the beginning of the year 1807, while Sir Walter's official situation, being now Sheriff of Selkirkshire and one of the Clerks of Session, confined him much to Edinburgh and the county of his Sherifffdom, I met him but rarely, and, as it appears by the next letter, our correspondence also had not been frequent. At the period of that letter my family had removed for a time to the south of England, on account of the state of Mrs. Skene's health, which had suffered from the unusual severity of several of the late winters in the highlands of Aberdeenshire where we resided. Although considerably benefited by the mildness of the Hampshire climate, her health was, however, not sufficiently re-established to supersede the precaution of choosing a still warmer region for our residence the ensuing winter, which we accordingly passed at the town of Aix in Provence.

The change in my condition from the free and unfettered life of a bachelor to that of a home-stricken Benedict for some time interfered with the time I had been used to pass in Sir Walter's

company, especially in the summer. For during his residence at Ashestiel I never failed to pass part of the season with him, in those occupations and amusements which suited the taste of each. The morning portion of the day was invariably allotted by Sir Walter from the early hour of six to his study. We spent some hours riding at random over the hills, or coursing with the greyhounds, visiting such scenes as history or tradition had marked as interesting, spearing salmon in the Tweed by sunshine, and often by torch at night, called ‘Burning the water,’ as described by Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, in some of his works. This amusement is not without its hazard, and it is generally in the pools of the river where the best fish are found to lie, the depth of which it is not easy by torchlight to estimate with sufficient accuracy. So that it not infrequently happens that in making a determined thrust at a fish discovered at the bottom of the water, the depth far exceeds what is expected, and instead of the point reaching the bottom, the fisher finds himself launched with corresponding vehemence heels over head into the water; the fish and spear both gone, the light thrown out of the grate by the concussion given to the boat, and quenched in the stream, while the boat itself recedes perhaps beyond his reach. Such are the perils of ‘burning the water’: the pleasure consists in being chilled with wet and cold, in having your shins broken against the stones in the dark, and probably in

missing every fish you aim at. Upon one of these occasions Sir Walter went over the boat's gunwale, having missed his blow, and had I not accidentally been at the moment close to him and made a grasp at him as he went overboard, by which I got hold of him by the pocket of his jacket, he would have had to swim on shore.

But our excursions from Ashestiel were often of greater extent and longer duration, in the course of which there were few subjects of Border history or romance, and scarcely a portion of the scenery of the Border counties, however secluded and remote, that we did not explore.

We traversed the entire vale of the Ettrick with its beautiful tributary pasture glens, and everywhere found a hearty welcome from the farmers at whose houses we stopped, either for dinner, or for passing the night. Nothing could be more gratifying than the frank and hospitable reception which everywhere greeted our arrival, however unexpected, while the exhilarating air of the mountains and the exercise of the day made us relish the fare and enjoy the varied display of character in its simple, unaffected dress, which the affability of the Sheriff never failed to draw forth in genuine purity. Hence the accuracy and characteristic traits of that interesting class of persons, the pasture farmers of the Border, which pervade the delineations in Sir Walter's works.

The beauty of the scenery gave full employment to my pencil, with the free and frequent



exercise of which he never seemed to feel impatient, for he was ready and willing at all times to alight where any scene attracted our notice, and set himself down beside me on the braeside to con over some appropriate ballad, or narrate the traditions of the glen, and sometimes, but rarely, to note in his book some passing ideas, for in general his memory was the great storehouse on which he confidently relied for all occasions. And much amusement we had in talking over the incidents, conversations, and exhibition of manners that had occurred in the different houses where we had baited.

The course of the Yarrow had also its full share of these rambling excursions, which derived an additional zest from the uncertainty which so often attended the issue of our proceedings as we chanced to get entangled among the hills, in following any game which the dogs had started, and had thus to trust to chance for our night's lodging. These casual adventures were quite to Sir Walter's taste; and he particularly enjoyed the perplexities which often befell our two attendants, the one a Savoyard, the other a portly Scottish butler, both uncommonly bad horsemen, but equally sensitive to their personal dignity, which the roughness of the ground we had to traverse made it difficult with either to maintain, and particularly with my foreigner, whose seat on horseback resembled that of a pair of compasses astride. His companion, a

lumbering, heavy fellow, had protected himself against the occasional showers which skirted along the hill paths we had to pursue, with a great cloak, which streamed from his shoulders when his steed was urged to a gallop, and kept flapping in the face of his neighbour, who could never manage to keep out of its way, having enough to do to preserve his own equilibrium without thinking of attempting to control the pace of his horse, or to seek other relief than indulging in a volley of French oaths, which of course fell quite harmless on the ears of his companion. Occasionally the interruption of a ditch or turf fence rendered it indispensable to venture on a leap, and no farce could be more amusing than the state of perplexity into which such occurrences threw our worthy squires, politely declining in favour of each other the honour of first daring the adventure, while their impatient steeds kept fretting about, and the dogs clamouring their encouragement to them to get on. These amusing scenes generally terminated in the horses renouncing their allegiance and springing forward, whether their masters chose or not, leaving them to settle with their saddles as best they could. Although a tumble was not an infrequent result of these exploits, they had one day their full revenge in seeing both their masters prostrated in a peat bog. Having been to visit the wild scenery of the hills above Moffat, remarkable for the cascade of the 'Grey

Mare's Tail,' and the dark mountain tarn, called Loch Skene, we had got bewildered by the thick fog which generally envelops the wild and rugged features of that lonely scene, and in groping our way among the bogs and black peat hags, the ground gave way, and down we went, horsemen, horses and all, into a slough of peaty mud and black water, out of which, entangled as we were with our plaids and our prostrate nags, it was not easy to extricate ourselves. We had prudently left our own horses at a farmhouse below, and got the use of the farmer's hill ponies for the occasion; otherwise the result might have been serious. As it was we rose like the spirits of the bog, covered with slime; to free themselves from this our ponies rolled about among the heather, and we had nothing for it but to follow their example. We finally reached the loch, and saw an eagle rise majestically from its margin. One cannot well imagine a more desolate and savage scene than that part of Loch Skene, particularly as it then presented itself, partially disclosed from under the thick folds of fog that rolled over its surface; suddenly caught by an occasional gust of wind the fog was rent asunder, giving for a moment some more distant portion to view, then closing again and opening in some other quarter, so as at one time to show a projecting rocky point, at another an island with a few blighted trees and the cheerless scene of hags and heath in which it lay. Much of the scenery in the tale of *Old*

*Mortality* was drawn from the recollection of this day's ride. We got down to Moffat, and thence returned by Ettrick Water.

It was in the course of one of these excursions that we encountered the amusing personage introduced into the tale of *Guy Mannering* under the name of 'Tod Gabbie,' although the appellation by which the original passed in the country was 'Tod Willie.'<sup>1</sup> He was one of those vermin-destroyers who gain a subsistence among the farmers in Scotland by relieving them of foxes, polecats, rats, and such like depredators. The individual in question was a half-witted, stuttering, and most original-looking creature, ingeniously clothed in a sort of tattered attire, to no part of which could any of the usual appellations of man's garb be appropriately given. We came suddenly upon this crazy sportsman in one of the wild glens of Roxburghshire, shouting and bellowing on the track of a fox ; which his not less ragged pack of mongrels were tracking round the rocky face of a hill. He was like a scarecrow run off, with some half-dozen grey-plaided shepherds in pursuit of him, with a reserve of shaggy curs yelping at their heels. Of course we soon joined the hurry-scurry with all our auxiliaries in attendance, and the chase having been at length brought to a successful termination, a most whimsical scene of vociferation and triumph took place between Willie and the favourite individuals of his pack, for he

<sup>1</sup> Chapter xxv.

disdained for some time to notice any one who had joined in the chase, until he had caressed each dog in his turn, praising some and scolding others, and ever and anon spurning with his foot the poor slaughtered fox, and pouring on him what seemed to be a volley of abuse and indignation, in language apparently intelligible to his dogs, but certainly not so to the hearers of his own species. At Sir Walter's request I made a drawing of this scene which forms one of the series of 'Waverley Localities.'

We were kindly invited by Mr. Laidlaw to accompany him to his father's farm of the Blackhouse Tower, which we reached after a long and intricate ride, having been again led out of our direct course by the greyhounds, with whom some stranger dogs had joined company, setting off in full pursuit upon the track of what we presumed to be another fox. The course was long and perplexing, from the mist that skirted the tops of the hills. At length we reached the scene of slaughter, and were much distressed to find that a stately he-goat had been the unhappy victim of our pursuit. He seemed to have fought a stout battle for his life, but now lay mangled in the midst of his panting enemies, of whom some bore the scars of battle, and all exhibited a strong consciousness of delinquency and apprehension of the lash, which was of course bestowed upon them, to soothe the *manes* of the poor goat. After all, the dogs were not so much to blame for

mistaking the game flavour of the luckless capricorn for legitimate sport, as the fog effectually hid the object of pursuit from their sight as well as from ours.

We received, as usual, a most cordial welcome at the farm of the Blackhouse, where we passed the night, and as so many traits of our entertainment seem to have been the original types of incidents afterwards introduced into various parts of Sir Walter's works, it may be worth while to notice the demeanour of our ancient host and his family. There was none of the hurry and discomposure which the sudden arrival of guests upon a retired family so often occasions. We had been descried from a distance, and the old man was already at the door with a bottle and glass to welcome our arrival. We were taken to inspect the flock of lambs, while the room was prepared for dinner, to which the good wife got a hint that a little addition might be required. And a plain, substantial repast it was, graced with a huge flagon of home-brewed ale, the principal farm servants sitting down at the same table, but in the most respectful manner, with their bonnets in their hand, while the old man delivered a somewhat lengthy grace, with a very impressive solemnity of manner. The old mistress did show some symptoms of household anxieties upon the occasion, and the other females most unnecessarily pinched themselves in room upon their seats, but the decorum of all was quite pleasing, and the

conversation unembarrassed and far from uninteresting. With the removal of the dishes, and the conclusion of the old man's after-grace, the lads and lasses made their hasty reverence, and bundled off with more precipitation than was required, especially as they jammed up the door in their haste and upset a stool or two in their impatience to get from under restraint. A punch-bowl was then introduced, filled and emptied to many good sentiments and toasts. Then followed a second visit to the sheep and the farm-yard, and upon returning to the house the whole household of every class assembled to hear the master read a chapter of the Bible, offer up a prayer for all, and give them his blessing for the night: a little cheese and bread followed, and then every one to bed. Our repose was somewhat disturbed by the gambols of the rats, who seemed to have established free passage through every corner of the house, and, having got possession of the remainder of a leg of mutton, they had a hot skirmish about the prize, which was dragged about to our great disturbance, and finally transported to the top of my servant's bed, who complained in the morning that he had been kept awake all night by their 'charring the jiggot about over his head for hours,' finally dropping it into his bed along with a host of combatants for the property. We were astir betimes, and Mr. Laidlaw attended to conduct us to the stream that ran past the house, conducting Sir Walter to

one position, and me to another for the purpose of our morning ablutions, the rest of the household taking lower stations, and a herd-boy attending with a great towel for our use. Then followed the morning prayer, and all dispersed to their respective avocations.

Such was the mode of life which under small modification seemed to prevail generally among the Border farmers, and such was the absence of ceremony so far as it presented itself to us, whenever we had occasion to partake of it. Sometimes, it is true, a little more whisky punch was urged upon us than was altogether agreeable, but from motives of pure, unostentatious hospitality alone, and the anecdotes of some of the burly Dinmonts we met with when a little heated with the glass were often quite original and entertaining.

St. Mary's Loch and the Loch of the Lowes was a favourite excursion, where we generally had the company of Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, bandying with Sir Walter ballad upon ballad, and tradition upon tradition, and whatever of ancient legend the scenery and subject of conversation suggested to them. Hogg was in the habit of chanting his verses in a sort of sing-song recitative, which had a rather pleasing effect. He sang to us his song of Donald Macdonald, and various other very characteristic compositions. We ascended the Megget and came down the beautiful vale of the Manor Water, where some mention of 'Bowed Davie,' an eccentric inhabitant of that quarter, was



afterwards elaborated in the fertile imagination of my friend into the interesting romance of the *Black Dwarf*. We visited Traquair, the ruined tower of Elibank, which never failed to produce the story of 'Muckle Mou'ed Meg,' and incidents relating to the old Lairds of the Black Barony, Teviotdale, and Borthwick Water, and the wild and lonely tower of Buccleugh. The fine castle of Newark, the subject of the *Minstrelsy*, was a frequent object of our rides ; also Ancrum, Thirlestane, and Jedburgh, where we dined with the historian of Queen Anne ; Kelso, where a fine old gentleman, an uncle of Sir Walter, gave us a frequent welcome, and Minto, Roxburgh, and Gilnockie ; in short, wherever amusement was to be found or information gained. We paid a most agreeable visit of a week to the Duke and Duchess of Buccleugh while residing at Langholme, and upon that occasion the otter hunt, which is well described in *Guy Mannering*, was got up at the Duke's desire.

There was one excursion which had been long projected, but which I am sorry to say was by one circumstance or another constantly postponed, and which never took place. Its object was to explore the English side of the debatable land, making Rokeby our abiding point, whose most agreeable proprietor, Mr. Morritt, had long bespoken our visit. Sir Walter had already been there, but he desired to explore it afresh when more at leisure, and have drawings made of the

scenery. Kirkcudbright and Wigtonshire were also postponed, but afterwards at Sir Walter's request I went there to see some views he wished to have introduced into etchings of the 'Waverley Localities.'

Whatever interesting spots are to be found on the banks of the Tweed from its source to its mouth were frequently visited, and I verily believe that there is not a ford in the whole course of the river which we did not traverse. Sir Walter had an amazing fondness for fords, and was not a little adventurous in plunging through them in whatever state the river might chance to be. Even where there happened to be an adjoining bridge, he scorned to go ten yards out of his way if it was possible to scramble through the water, and it is to be remarked that most of his heroes seem to have been endowed with similar tastes; even the White Lady of Avenel delighted in the ford. He had many amusing anecdotes and jokes about fords. He sometimes even attempted them on foot, where his lameness considerably interfered with his progress among the slippery stones. Upon one occasion of that kind I was assisting him to pass the Ettrick on foot, and we had got upon a stone in the middle of the water, when some story about a Kelpie occurred to him, which he stopped upon our slippery footing to relate, and laughing at his own joke, he slipped off and pulled me headlong after him; so that we had both a complete drenching, to the great entertainment of

Mrs. Skene and Mr. Morritt, who were standing on the bank of the stream.

The portly quarto with which Sir Walter intimates his intention to 'jog my elbow' was that containing *Rokeby*, which had just made its appearance. He was kind enough to send me a copy of all his works as they came out, generally accompanied with expressions not less acceptable from his unaffected kindness.

EDINBURGH, 6th January 1813.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Although we are both bad correspondents, yet as there are few things would give me more pain than to think you had actually forgotten me, I take the liberty to jog your elbow with an immense quarto which Longman and Company, Booksellers, Paternoster Row, London, will receive with all the speed of a Berwick smack. Be so good as to desire any of your correspondents in London to inquire for it, and send it down to Southampton. I trust it will give you some amusement. There is a bandit in the poem, a man who may match the Fra Diavolo of your Italian friends.

I am delighted to hear that Mrs. Skene's state of health leaves you at full liberty to enjoy the beautiful and picturesque country of which you are a temporary inhabitant. I have seldom been in any which interested me so much. The depth and variety of woodland scenery in the Forest puts our Scottish woods to shame, but they want our beautiful dales and glens and rivulets, for which their marshy brooks are a most wretched substitute. I wish you much to make a little sketch for me of the ruinous fort and landing-

place at Netley Abbey, with which I was particularly struck, more so indeed than with the ruins themselves, though so very finely situated and accompanied. But the character of the sand fort and landing-place had to me something very original.

If William Rose comes to your neighbourhood you must get acquainted with him. I will swear for your liking each other, and will send you a line of introduction, though I judge it unnecessary, as this letter might serve the purpose. He was my guide through the New Forest, where I spent some very happy days. Return, my dear Skene, my kind compliments to Mrs. S., and believe me ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

All good things of the new season attend you and yours.

The following was written upon the eve of Sir Walter's setting out upon his visit to Flanders and France upon the restoration of peace in the year 1815, and of which an account is given to the public in *Paul's Letters*.

He was still desirous to have my drawings published with letterpress from the corresponding parts of a journal, which I had been in the habit of keeping when engaged in any foreign travel, but my reluctance to that ordeal was not easily overcome, so that the project did not take effect.

EDINBURGH, 7th January 1816.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I would long since have written to you on the subject of your journal, but I waited for Constable's return from London. He

seems well disposed to enter into the transaction upon the footing of his taking upon him the whole risk and expense and dividing the full profits. To understand this, however, you must be aware that first the publisher subtracts from the gross sum about £27 or £28 per cent. as the allowance to the retail booksellers, so that the calculation is made upon what they call sale price. From what remains there is deducted the expenses of print, paper, engraving, etc., and something in the way of incidents or advertising. All these, speaking roughly, come to more than a third of the gross amount, the rest is considered free profit and divisible. Upon the best calculation I can make, an author gains generally about one-sixth part of the whole, or half a guinea upon three guineas. I believe upon the whole it is the fairest mode of transacting business, and at present, when capital is ill to be come at, it is perhaps the only eligible one.

But the most difficult thing is to arrange the mode in which the engravings are to be executed, which I need not tell you I am totally ignorant of. Stroke engraving is intolerably expensive, and one is by no means sure of having it executed well even by employing the best engravers and paying the highest price. These gentlemen's temptation to make money is so great that they do not hesitate to employ their pupils on works to which they give their own name. Constable seems to incline to a sort of etching or *aqua tinta* affair, which looks showy enough and can be executed, he says, for five or six guineas a plate. As I wish you to judge for yourself, I caused him to send you a copy of Sir George Mackenzie's *Travels* as a specimen of the style in which he thinks your journal should be published. He proposes one edition of five hundred copies of one

of the volumes should be published, and would prefer the Tour through Sicily and Malta, though I believe he would take either you recommend. I have sent the volume of Mackenzie to Miss Skene, who will forward it by the first conveyance. As we must hope for your coming up in the spring, if you do not like this style of etching, which appears to me slight and a little too sketchy I own, I think you had better put off a settlement till you come up, for although I could take it upon me to act for you in matters of literary concern, yet I am by no means qualified to do so in point of *vertu*.

I cannot express to you how much I was disappointed by finding you had left Edinburgh just two days before my arrival. I was obliged to stay till I had completed a small purchase in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, which lies convenient for me, and being the property of a country body I did not know what sort of *pigs* might have seen through the bargain if I had left it before signing and sealing. Indeed, it was well I stuck by it, for twenty-four hours after, I had the offer of £600 profit on my bargain, which was more than an eighth part of the whole purchase money.

I have looked over the journals, and think them, as I always did, excellently fitted for publication; though the language may here and there want a little combing, it is plain, distinct, and impressive upon striking subjects. Whatever I can do to help the matter through as corrector of the press or otherwise, believe I will do it with pleasure. But still, if you are to come up in two or three months, as I hope and trust you will, I think the matter will be more satisfactorily set a-going under your own eye and little or no time lost. Should you, however,

entirely approve of Mackenzie's book and plates, there can be no occasion for delay.

I hope you will have no objection to take a scamper to the Continent one of these days. I think of it seriously either this year or the year after, for as my children are getting up and my household can go on as well in my absence as presence, I would willingly, while I have some stamina left, take a view of the Rhine and Switzerland and as far in Italy as I could, returning by Spain and the South of France. Should you think of this seriously we will go together, for you, like me, are I know of opinion with the old song :

‘A light heart and a thin pair of breeches,  
Go through the wide world, brave boys’ ;

and are not therefore disposed, when out of England, to bother themselves for want of English comforts.

My best and kindest compliments attend Mrs. Skene and the young people, and believe me ever, my dear Skene, most truly and affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

This letter referred to the same subject of bringing my crude remarks before the public; had they been even worthy of it, the statement from Sir Walter's experience of the small share of the proceeds which can be permitted to slip by the booksellers' pocket holds out but slender inducement in point of profit. The proposal of another journey to the Continent continued for some time to be a favourite subject in contemplation, but circumstances did not permit its taking effect.

ABBOTSFORD, 4th September 1816.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I had your letter this morning, and take the opportunity of writing by your old acquaintance William Laidlaw of Blackhouse (whose hospitality you cannot have forgotten) to say how delighted I am with the prospect of seeing Mrs. Skene and you at this the tiniest of all possible houses. The circuit comes on next week, and as I must attend it, it would be greatly in the way of our enjoying ourselves. After the 17th I shall be at home and most happy to see you and Mrs. Skene. Mrs. Scott's love attends Mrs. S. and the Mackenzies. Morritt, I expect, will be at Abbotsford about the same time; you will be delighted with him, and we will have such fun as never was.

Laidlaw is in quest of a highland factory, his farm not answering well in these bad times. We hear L——<sup>1</sup> wants such a person, and I have begged Colin to recommend him if he finds an opening. He will be a real treasure.

In coming to Abbotsford you do not pass the Yair Bridge, but take a turn to the left down a fine new road which continues down the north side of the Tweed until you come opposite to Abbotsford, where there is a good ford. You will know it by seeing the road go up the hill from the riverside. It is rather past this cottage than opposite to it, at the foot of a bank. But if we know your day, we will be on the look out for you. Once more health and fraternity,

WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Tuesday, 10th December 1818.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Mr. Terry, whom you have I believe seen at our house, is going to Aberdeen

<sup>1</sup> Illegible.



on a professional expedition for a week or ten days. All my old acquaintance in your northern capital are dead or have forgot me, so that I will beg the favour of you to give Mr. Terry (whose manners and acquirements are far above his profession) a card to any one who may be disposed to show him a little civility and point out what is to be seen at Aberdeen and in the neighbourhood.

Terry is passionately fond of drawing, and is himself a tolerable artist. I wish you would let him look at one of your portfolios, as he admires your sketches extremely. He was bred an architect under Wyatt, and has been assisting me in my doings here.—Ever, my dear Skene, most truly yours,  
WALTER SCOTT.

The person alluded to in the last note was Mr. Terry, an actor of some celebrity, who married a daughter of Mr. Nasmyth, landscape-painter in Edinburgh, and herself also a very good artist. Sir Walter was very kind to Terry and, after his death, to his family. He generally supplied him with any poetical address he might have occasion to deliver in the way of his profession, and otherwise assisted him in many things. It was his desire to befriend Terry which first led to his dramatising some of the Waverley romances, in which Terry, being a man of considerable literary acquirements and good taste, gave his assistance; and the extraordinary success which attended the first productions of one of these on the stage soon led to the arrangement of the others for the same purpose. Sir Walter was at this time deeply engaged in the composition of these remarkable

works, which for so great a length of time seemed altogether to supersede any other class of literary production in the possession of public attention, and the impatience with which the appearance of each new work was awaited by almost all classes of readers from the lightest to the gravest, after it had been announced, was quite extraordinary. It was the regular subject of conversation in every society, and so quick was the succession of the volumes, that the merits of one had hardly been discussed among its numerous readers, and the collision of opinions on the subject, which were in general advocated with a degree of keenness resembling the fervour of party spirit, had hardly settled down, when a new romance, of perhaps a totally different character, made its entrance on the public stage, to undergo a similar scrutiny. The effort not of mind only, but of actual bodily labour which was required to sustain this full flood of brilliant works, was to none more extraordinary than to those who were privileged to see the ease and unexcited tranquillity with which it was continued. He had his regular hours for study and writing, which no doubt began early, usually at six o'clock, but seldom engrossed above one-half of the day, as the afternoon from dinner-time to bedtime (eleven o'clock) was uniformly passed with his family and friends, in conversation and music when there were strangers; when alone, he generally read aloud for part of the evening. But even during his regular

hours of writing he never showed the least impatience of interruption, but on the contrary was always ready to break off from his occupation, and join in whatever was proposed with a degree of good-humour and indulgence to the wish of others which has often surprised me, when it was obvious that his mind had been deeply engaged in something quite foreign to the employment suggested to him. He made little mystery of the subject which had been occupying his attention, for the train of his anecdotes and conversation at the time was generally such as distinctly to indicate the theme on which he had been writing. His dogs were the usual inmates of his study, and to them many a good joke was addressed. He had great amusement in supposing what the observations of his dogs, could they utter them, would be on such occasions, diversified by their several characters and propensities. He took great pleasure in his dogs at all times, and nothing delighted him more than observing the fine character of the animals, and their devotion to their master. Accordingly dogs bear a conspicuous part in most of his works, and they are always noble beasts in their way. When I had occasion, which was not infrequent, to go to his study during his usual hours of writing, it was a matter of surprise to me to observe the readiness with which he broke off his employment, however much he seemed to be engrossed with it. He laid aside his pen with seeming indifference, although in the middle of a sentence, or closed the

book he was reading without even marking the page, and entering immediately with perfect cheerfulness and attention upon the subject proposed, seemed to dismiss without any appearance of reluctance the subject upon which he had just been engaged. And upon returning, perhaps some hours after, to his study, he would instantly resume his subject as if it had suffered no interruption, and go on with the half-finished sentence, continuing to write with perfect ease and readiness as if he had been writing to dictation. The irritability and impatience which are generally found to accompany the keenness of feelings and activity of mind characteristic of Scott, seemed utterly foreign to his natural disposition; placidity and kindness of demeanour to every one was in him no factitious result of self-control or breeding, and required no effort to maintain, but obviously welled forth freely and naturally from the source of a pure and amiable heart. He was remarkably bold and intrepid, and would, there is little doubt, have proved under exciting circumstances a most determined and dangerous antagonist as a man, but the passion of anger seemed unnatural to him, and it surrendered its momentary hold on his mind, giving place to kindness upon the very first opportunity. He always volunteered some jocular excuse for any waywardness or inconvenience to which any one had subjected him, with two exceptions, which, though apparently of but trifling import, were the only occurrences

under which I observed him to testify impatience : namely, if any one had inadvertently used his pen, or if he found a book carelessly treated, as is sometimes the case in drawing-rooms.

By this time the conviction had become very general that the authorship of the ‘Waverley Novels’ belonged exclusively to Sir Walter, and those friends who enjoyed his intimacy at the time these works were in progress had abundant evidence of that fact in the frankness of his conversation in general, had evidence been otherwise required. The object of his incognito on the subject was as obvious as it was judicious, and although jocular allusions to the fact were not infrequent, few had the bad taste to court a confidence which was unnecessary, and which might be unpleasant to the candour of his disposition. A good deal has been said on the directness of his denial of the authorship when it was suddenly put to him by the late King, George IV., but the fact, which I had from his own lips, is that he dexterously gave the King’s question the go-by, and His Majesty by his expression showed that he was aware of having put the question somewhat inadvertently. Sir Walter’s answer was, ‘I should be most proud to be the author of any work which your Royal Highness judged worthy of approval.’

I was little with Sir Walter at the time *Waverley* was written and published, being then resident in Aberdeenshire, and his claim to it I did not detect, although some parts created a little suspicion on

the subject, but *Guy Mannering* left no doubt; the identity of my friend shone forth in every chapter, and most accusingly in one instance. Something in the course of one of our rides had suggested to me the words of a German drinking-song, which I repeated to him; it took his fancy, and he made me repeat it to him two or three times over, which led me to expect a translation, and accordingly my song very soon made its appearance, not in translation, but *in ipsissimis verbis*, as Dirk Hatteraick's song in *Guy Mannering*, in one line of which, however, there was a small mistake. Accordingly the first time I saw Sir Walter after having read the book, I mentioned how much delighted I had been with the work, and begged him, if he should chance to know the author, that he would give my best compliments to him and tell him that Dirk Hatteraick had made a mistake in his song, which ought to have been so and so. He laughed and said, 'Very well, I shall endeavour to let him know, and I have no doubt he will bow to your criticism.' In fact, so little scrupulous was he of caution in this respect, that the original narrators of many of the anecdotes and incidents so dexterously worked up in these various publications could have no difficulty in recognising their stories, so that, however much for a time the public in general may have canvassed the probabilities of the authorship of these novels and given plausible reasons for attributing them to others, his immediate friends were abundantly aware of the futility

of such an attempt. Sir Walter himself was very much amused with a laborious and most ingenious work of an Oxford man on this question, and said, with a most whimsical expression as he tossed down the book, ‘Faith, that fellow has almost convinced me that he is right after all,’ the object of the book being to demonstrate that Sir Walter Scott was positively not the author of any one of the *Waverley* Novels. But the most amusing adventure connected with the subject was his being nearly compelled to defend his incognito, pistol in hand. Calling upon him one day in North Castle Street, I found him standing in the middle of his room with a spruce little man, who took his leave when I entered. Sir Walter returned from accompanying his friend to the door, laughing and striding up and down the room, as was his custom when much amused. ‘You little thought that you would come to be my second in a duel,’ he said; ‘my cousin, Mr. C—— of A——, a *ci-devant* Major, has been here to challenge me, and what do you think is the cause of umbrage? He told me that as he had reason to suspect me of being the author of *Waverley* and other novels, he came to acknowledge his having offered me an unpardonable affront in declaring in a company lately that he himself was the author of these works, and that therefore the real author was entitled to ample satisfaction, and that he, the Major, could not feel at ease until he had given it, and received his fire.’ Sir Walter in vain assured him that so far as he, Sir Walter,

could have anything to do in the matter, the Major was at full liberty to claim all or any part of these works, and that he had no doubt that the real author, whoever he might be, would feel quite indifferent also on the subject, particularly as he did not choose to advance any claim publicly, and therefore that the Major might look upon them as common property, free to anybody. This, however, would not satisfy the Major, who seemed to resolve that nothing short of the purification of gunpowder could cleanse the stain, and Sir Walter said that after exhausting all his arguments, both serious and jocular, he had despaired of succeeding, till he assured his belligerent cousin that he would meet him, should the authorship of these novels ever be brought home to him, or if the Major should ever claim to be the author of the poems which he had put his name to, and were the only works anybody was entitled to lay to his door. He was much entertained with the absurdity of the adventure, and as the individual is now gone, as well as the object of his hostile intentions, there is no harm in mentioning it. He generally read his poems to several of his friends in proof-sheets as they were printed, and a copy of *Marmion* was sent to me progressively in sheets as it came out, with a view to that copy being interspersed with pencil vignettes on the blank portions of the sheets and a few drawings, to form a presentation copy to Queen Caroline, then recently married to the Regent. This was long before the misunderstanding which led



to so many disagreeable occurrences in the fate of that princess. Sir Walter had been presented to her in London, had frequently had the honour of dining at her table, and had obtained permission to send her a copy of his forthcoming work. I did my best to embellish the work so far as my feeble pencil gave me the means, and when the Queen afterwards sent a piece of plate to Sir Walter, it was accompanied with a similar gift to me, of which at the time I was proud, fully as much from being associated, even in so slender a manner, with that celebrated work, as the honour of receiving a gift from so high a quarter. However, the misfortunes of the princess took place soon after this, and the public (already somewhat busy with the Queen's character) took the liberty of accusing my worthy friend of malapropos adulation, a purpose entirely at variance with his disposition. So violent were the feelings on the subject, that I recollect having been severely taken to task by the late Duchess of Gordon at a party she gave, because I still retained the gift which had been given to me, and Sir Walter came in for his share of abuse. I did my best to defend us both, but the Duchess was not to be pacified by anything I could say. In the introduction to the Fourth Canto the description about the shepherd's life really took place shortly before it became arrayed in verse, and, as I have said, one whole Canto was composed on Portobello sands during the early morning drills of the Midlothian cavalry,

which were then quartered in Musselburgh and Inveresk for their annual season of training. He delighted in the hilarity of the cavalry mess, of which he was himself the great exciting spirit. At the first formation of that corps a weekly supper meeting of the officers took place alternately at each other's houses to regulate the affairs of the corps, which continued for many years after in the shape of a cavalry club for convivial purposes, when the duty part of the meeting had ceased to be required any longer. At supper the ladies joined the party, and for many years it continued to be a most agreeable meeting, and one in which Sir Walter much delighted. When some of the members had retired to the country, the evening meetings were sometimes commuted to a dinner-party in the country, productive not infrequently of adventures which afforded subject of amusement afterwards. Returning by the Glasgow Road from one of these scenes of festivity, some of the party on horseback and some in gigs, Sir Walter was in my gig, and the Lord Advocate, Sir William Rae, then High Sheriff of Orkney, drove another also with a friend. Chief Baron Dundas, Baron Clerk, then Sheriff of Edinburgh, Sir William Forbes, Mr. Mackenzie, and several others were on horseback, and it was agreed among the horsemen on setting out that there should not be any racing, considering the lateness of the hour and the state of the party. However, as the Lord Advocate and I agreed that

the interdict had not included the charioteers, the speed of our progress soon increased to a positive race, the consequence of which was that a wheel of my gig struck a milestone, and the Bard and myself were projected over a wall and some distance into an adjoining field. The body of the gig ensconced itself between the milestone and the wall, and the horse made his escape into town with the shafts, dismounting a few of our friends as he passed with his extraordinary equipage. The horses of those that had been dismounted also took the hint and made the best of their way to their respective stables, leaving their riders in the dust. In the meantime a Glasgow coach came up, and was most unceremoniously assailed on the King's way by these great law authorities, who were taken for a band of regular footpads, and there ensued a skirmish which resulted, as we came up, in the escape of the coach, the whole party having to walk into town as they best could. However, these days of revelry soon passed away, and it is melancholy to reflect that of the revellers there now only remain in life the Lord Advocate and myself.

The unprecedented success of Sir Walter's publications and the profit accompanying that success enabled him to extend his establishment, and to purchase Abbotsford, to which he transferred his residence, and to commence the erection of the singular but very picturesque mansion which has since attracted so much

notice. Nevertheless, it was with considerable reluctance that he quitted the snug little mansion of Ashestiel, where he had passed so many happy days, and where the very inconveniences occasioned by its limited extent were a source of amusement, and an exercise for the ingenuity of his contrivance. The dining-parlour was often found to be so small as absolutely to preclude access to the table, which nearly filled the space when his party became swelled by accidental arrivals; and I recollect well the delight with which he discovered the means of making a most whimsical addition to it, in contriving a sort of low alcove under the adjoining stairs, where a person might sit, but had not height sufficient to enable him to stand up. Here chairs were placed, and a portion of the dinner-party had to creep into the recess, where they were very comfortable so long as they kept their seats, but might suffer for the indiscretion of rising up. He took care that his friend Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, a frequent and most agreeable guest, should not sit under the alcove, from his habitual absence of mind, and the custom he had when narrating any anecdote, which no one did in a more entertaining manner, or with a more richly stored memory, of getting up to act the part he was describing. But even in the most unencumbered portion of the room he was sure in these dramatic exploits, either to tread on some of the dogs, or upset something, which, however,

could in no way stay the animation of his style of narrating. Upon one occasion when Sir Walter was at Rokeby, he accompanied the squire on a visit to a neighbour of his, inhabiting a very old manor-house. A large and somewhat stiff party was assembled in the drawing-room, awaiting the announcement of dinner. The floor of this old apartment had become so uneven and so much sunk towards the middle, that the careful hostess had found it necessary for the symmetry of her room, and the stability of the chairs, to have them attached round the wall in their proper places by a cord. A circle of formal personages of both sexes occupied the chairs thus moored to each other, and amongst them Mr. Morritt, who, having got engaged in some story, and reaching the pitch of earnestness which generally evoked his pantomimic propensities, gave his chair an incautious jerk forward. The moorings of the whole party gave way, to the entire discomposure of its ceremonious circle. The impetus of the narrator's movement had instantly whirled him into the middle of the floor, whither he was followed with equal speed and surprise by several of his hearers, quite unconscious of the moving cause which had brought them into that conspicuous and awkward position, and none was more startled than Mr. Morritt himself, who could understand what had brought him into this situation, but could by no means comprehend how all these grand ladies and gentlemen had so miracu-

lously followed his example, among whom the hostess herself was perhaps the most embarrassed, not so much by the catastrophe itself, as by the difficulty of retrieving the propriety and decorum of her party. In the meantime Mr. Morritt began an apologetic oration, which was interrupted, to the great relief of all present, by the announcement of dinner.

Sir Walter was at this time knee-deep in the mortar tub, and very busily engaged in the completion of the house of Abbotsford, of which he was himself the chief architect, so far as the idea went; for its expression on paper he generally applied to my pencil. Much of the architectural detail was supplied by that very clever artist Mr. Blore, who is more conversant with the Gothic style than any professional man in this country, beside possessing the advantage of a very pure and excellent taste. Mr. Bullock of London supplied much of the inner architecture, which in most respects is remarkably successful in the correct and elegant execution of the wainscoting; he also supplied a great portion of the furnishing, which in general savours of the antique, and is quite in character with the decoration of the house. While the house was in this unfinished state, a circumstance occurred which, for the curious coincidence accompanying it, afforded some amusing speculation, and which, as Sir Walter said, appeared to defy satisfactory explanation. He had been for some time expecting

the arrival of a portion of the furniture along with the wainscot doors and windows of the library and principal apartments, and had already written to Mr. Bullock on the subject, when one night he was awakened by a most extraordinary noise in the unfurnished rooms of flapping of doors and window shutters, and apparently the dragging about of heavy articles of furniture through the rooms, where he was aware there was nothing for even the wind to act upon, and at that hour of the night there was no probability of any person being there. After listening for a time to the noise, which was of some continuance, and for which he could in no way account, he awoke Lady Scott, who also heard it distinctly, and he then got up and went down to the rooms whence it proceeded. It had now ceased; everything was still and undisturbed in the apartments, nor had the temporary defence of the casements been blown out or so loosened as to occasion the flapping noise, and he could discover no cause whatever for the disturbance which awoke him.

Next morning he wrote to London to hasten down the furniture, and he mentioned as a joke the disturbance which his family had received from the ghosts of the furniture which, like Lochiel's Warning, had not only thrown their shadows, but their substance before, and that in a state of merriment and recklessness which he trusted would not be habitual to them. The answer brought by return of the post was not

only consistent with the usual train of ghostly adventure, but absolute fact; it announced the sudden death of Mr. Bullock on the very night the noise had occurred, and what is still more curious, it appears that a family in the neighbourhood of London, whose house also Mr. Bullock was employed to furnish, was disturbed on the same night by extraordinary noises of a similar description, which they also had mentioned in a jocular manner by letter addressed to Mr. Bullock the day after his death. This unaccountable coincidence was mentioned in the letter received in answer to Sir Walter's. I was not at Abbotsford at the time, but Sir Walter has often mentioned it since, but was never able to assign the cause which could have led to it.

Some years after, however, I was at Abbotsford on the occurrence of a somewhat similar incident which has been more talked of than anything connected with it would warrant. I allude to the supposed vision of Lord Byron, which Sir Walter Scott is alleged to have seen, but which in truth amounted to this simple occurrence. The account of Byron's death had reached Sir Walter in the morning, and had of course been the subject of conversation throughout the day. Towards dusk Sir Walter had parted from me in the library, and as he came round by the entrance hall, which was ornamented by armour and curiosities hung around the walls, and dimly lighted by the stained-glass windows, a cloak



carelessly thrown over a suit of armour in the corner, and surmounted by a head-piece upon which a gleam of party-coloured light fell, took to his eye so exactly the form, attitude, and even features of his departed friend, that he was for a moment staggered with the resemblance, which his imagination assisted in completing. The deception was so perfect that it was only upon a close approach that it yielded to the reality. Upon rejoining me in the library he mentioned the circumstance, and observed that it was the most perfect illusion he had ever met with, but the light had shifted by the time we returned to look at it again, and in no position could we recall the spectre. The circumstance, I recollect, led us to converse on the powers of the imitative arts, and the great dependence of their success in general on the influence they were able to exercise on the imagination. Sir Walter considered the main end and object of painting, music, and poetry to be in that respect the same; that the powers of each of them rested not in furnishing the subjects of imagination, ready dressed and served up, so much as in those happy and masterly touches which gave play to the imagination, and exerted the fancy to act and paint for itself by skilfully leading it to the formation of lofty conceptions and to the most pleasing exercise of its own attribute. Hence the superior effect to most minds of an ingenious sketch, where a dexterous and clever hint gives being to beauties which the

laborious details of painting could never portray. The value of simple melodies which touch the soul, and excite the music of the mind to fill up the measure, which the difficult and perplexing execution of professional skill, however surprising, can never call forth. In verse it is precisely the same; a poem should aim at skilful and delicate touches, which, avoiding too palpable a disclosure, strike the key-notes and give the desired action to the willing chords of imagination. He considered that view of the matter as accounting for the singular callousness of many people to the magic of the fine arts, and persons feeling susceptible to the beauties of one style, who were quite insensible to those of the others, because the gratification did not so much depend upon the success of the artist, or the merits of the poem, as on the capacity to catch up and receive the intended idea, and thence to fill up the picture or train of sentiment by the more vivid colours of imagination.

EDINBURGH, Saturday [1819].

DEAR SKENE,—Sir William Forbes has promised to dine here on Thursday at *five*; pray come if you possibly can with Mrs. Skene, if she can venture so far.—Yours truly,  
W. SCOTT.

I insert this simple note of invitation on account of an amusing occurrence that took place at the party and rendered an adjournment to the nearest hotel necessary. We were nearly all

assembled and expecting the announcement of dinner when sudden sounds of loud speaking and hubbub arose from the lower region of the house, followed by such a suffocating stench of soot as left no doubt as to the cause of disturbance below, which was confirmed by the volume of smoke that began to darken the windows from without. Some of us went down to the kitchen, and there beheld the flames driving out of the chimney; the spit with its well-roasted charge prostrate in the ashes; pots and pans in which was our expected dinner buried in soot; the fat cook-maid in an attitude of despair, lamenting over a fine turbot which had been overthrown on the floor, covered with soot as she was herself, and all the other servants also, each in her own way bewailing some of the varied items of the mischief. The only personages of the household who seemed rather to enjoy the catastrophe were honest Sir Walter himself, who laughed immoderately at the poor cook's dilemma, a pawky rogue of a servant-boy, who seemed to enjoy an accident which distressed cooky, and at the same time promised him some good pickings, and the dog Camp, who was busy shaking the soot from some mutton chops which he had extricated from an overturned pan. It was clear that matters were altogether irretrievable, especially as the chimney-sweeps had already got into the house, and were proceeding to execute their functions without much regard to the comfort of the family, and a servant was accordingly

despatched to order dinner at a neighbouring hotel, and to send coaches to convey the party thither. We met a lady coming in a chair as one of the guests, and her expression of surprise was most amusing when she found her chairmen turned to the right about by Sir Walter's orders, and pursuing with due speed a couple of hackney-coaches, she knew not whither, but certainly in the direction opposite to her intended destination. We passed an exceedingly agreeable evening.

Under the infliction of a severe illness Sir Walter had for nearly two years to struggle for his life, and only the natural strength of his constitution at length enabled him to throw it off. But with its disappearance, although he was restored to health, disappeared also much of his former vigour of body, activity and power of undergoing fatigue, while in personal appearance he had advanced twenty years in the downward course of life; his hair had become scanty and bleached to pure white, the fire of his eye was quenched, his step was more uncertain; he had lost the vigorous swinging gait with which he was used to move—in fact, old age had by many years anticipated its usual progress, and had marked how severely he had suffered. The complaint, that of gallstones, caused extreme bodily suffering. During his severest attack, he had been alone at Abbotsford with his daughter Sophia before her marriage to Mr. Lockhart, and had sent to say that he was

desirous I should come to him, which I did, remaining for ten days, till the attack had subsided. During the course of it, the extreme violence of the pain and spasmodic contractions of the muscles of the stomach were such at times that we scarcely expected that his powers of endurance could sustain him through the trial, and so much was he exhausted by some of the attacks as to leave us in frightful alarm as to what the result had actually been. One night I shall not soon forget. He had been frequently and severely ill during the day, and in the middle of the night I was summoned to his room where his daughter was already standing at his bedside, the picture of deep despair. The attack seemed to be intense, and we followed the directions left by the physician to assuage the pain, which for nearly a full hour bid defiance to our best endeavours. At length it seemed to subside, and he fell back exhausted on the pillows; his eyes were closed, and his countenance wan and livid. Apparently with corresponding misgivings, his daughter at one side of the bed and I at the other gazed for some time intently and in silence on his countenance, and then glanced with anxious inquiring looks at each other, till at length I placed my fingers on his pulse, to ascertain whether it had actually ceased to throb. I shall never forget the sudden beam which brightened his daughter's countenance, and for a moment dispelled the intense expression of anxiety which had for some

time overspread it, when Sir Walter, aware of my feeling his pulse and the probable purpose, whispered with a faint voice, but without opening his eyes, 'I am not *yet* gone.' After a time he recovered, and gave us a proof of the mastery of his mind over the sufferings of the body. 'Do you recollect,' he said to me, 'a small round turret near the gate of the Monastery of Aberbrothwick, and placed so as to overhang the street?' Upon answering that I did perfectly, and that a picturesque little morsel it was, he said: 'Well, I was there when a mob had assembled, excited by some purpose which I do not recollect, but failing of their original purpose, they took umbrage at the venerable little emblem of aristocracy, which still bore its weather-stained head so conspicuously aloft, and resolving to level it with the dust, they got a stout hawser from a vessel in the adjoining harbour, which a sailor lad, climbing up, coiled round the body of the little turret, and the rabble seizing the rope by both ends, tugged and pulled, and laboured long to strangle and overthrow the poor old turret, but in vain, for it withstood all their endeavours. Now that is exactly the condition of my poor stomach. There is a rope twisted round it, and the malicious devils are straining and tugging at it, and faith, I could almost think that I sometimes hear them shouting and cheering each other to their task, and when they are at it, I always have

the little turret and its tormentors before my eyes.'

He complained that particular ideas fixed themselves down upon his mind, which he had not power to shake off, but this was in fact the obvious consequence of the quantity of laudanum which it was necessary for him to swallow to allay the spasms. In the morning, after he had got some repose and had become rather better, he said with a smile: 'If you will promise not to laugh at me, I have a favour to ask. Do you know I have taken a childish desire to see the place where I am to be laid when I go home, which there is some probability may not now be long delayed. Now, as I cannot go to Dryburgh Abbey—that is out of the question at present—it would give me much pleasure if you would take a ride down, and bring me a drawing of that spot.' And he described the position minutely, and the exact point from which he wished the drawing to be made, that the site of his future grave might appear. His wish was accordingly complied with. It was afterwards engraved as a frontispiece to an account of the Family of Haliburton, of which he was a descendant by the female line. He had also prepared at this time the account of the recently discovered Regalia of Scotland, and had asked me to relieve him of the labour of correcting the proof-sheets. It was prepared for the benefit of his friend Sir Adam Ferguson, then

only Captain Ferguson, whom he had got appointed Keeper of the Regalia, and who was afterwards knighted on King George the Fourth's visit to Scotland.

In the progress of his illness upon this occasion he asked me one day to read to him a short ballad of Bürger in German, that he might amuse himself in translating it, which was accordingly done, and he put up the translation in his pocket-book, and refused to let me see it, saying it was not worth reading. However, some months after, when he began to be decidedly convalescent, he reminded me of the translation, and taking it out of his pocket-book, he said that he had had his reasons both for writing it and for refusing to show what he had written, and that he now felt more nervous than he could express in putting it to the use he intended, which was as a test of the state of his mind during his late illness, for that he had had frequent misgivings in the progress of it that his faculties were giving way, and might never again be recovered. 'Now, I really am not bold enough,' he said, 'to be my own executioner; do you now take the manuscript, and after I have read the original, read it aloud, and let it pronounce the sentence of sanity or imbecility as it may chance.' Accordingly this singular experiment was put to the test. Sir Walter read his part, and turning his head aside, desired me to go on, and upon my reading the translation, which really was very good, cast a most whimsical glance



from under his heavy eyebrows, 'Well, is Richard himself again?' There was no doubt of it. I wanted to pocket the manuscript, but he would not suffer me; he said it had answered its end and must not be urged further.

In fact, it was the use of laudanum which gave birth to all these apprehensions, and he was now satisfied of the truth of this; the failure of his mind, he said, was the only dread that preyed upon his spirits, for he had no reason to trust much to the stability of a frame of body which had had to struggle through such a state of feebleness as his had in infancy. He described to me his state in early childhood to have been so exceedingly weakly that he was not able either to walk or to move his limbs, and when he lived at his grandfather's at Sandy Knowe, or Smailholm Tower, it was their practice, whenever a sheep was killed, instantly to wrap him up in the warm hide, with a view to his thereby gaining strength, and that one of the very earliest recollections of his life was being laid in his sheepskin on the floor of his grandfather's parlour; that old Sir George Makdougall of Makerstoun, formerly Colonel of the Scots Greys, and a friend of his grandfather, used to try to induce him to move forward on all-fours, by placing his watch on the floor before him, and dragging it on in proportion as he strove to advance, and he recollected equally his anxious desire to do this and his inability to accomplish it. The appearance of the kind old soldier

was still quite fresh in his memory, although he was then only three years old—that he was a grey-headed, erect old man, wearing a whitish coloured coat, embroidered with silver lace, a red vest and breeches, and a small cocked-hat turned up with gold lace.

He recollected being carried out on the sunny mornings to the place where the shepherd was tending the flocks, and being there laid down upon the grass among the sheep to roll about all day long at his pleasure, and he thought that the sort of fellowship with the sheep and lambs had impressed an affection in his mind towards these animals that had ever continued unabated. When he became impatient to go home, the shepherd was instructed to give a loud, shrill whistle as a signal to his maid to come for him. By degrees he gained more strength, but in the meantime he narrowly escaped being the victim of a tragedy of which his maid was the heroine. She had formed a connection with a young man in the neighbourhood of Smailholm, but had had her fond hopes suddenly blighted by the desertion of the faithless swain, which the poor girl took so much to heart as to become nearly distracted. According to her own confession afterwards, she had determined, since she could not be revenged on the young man himself, to wreak her malice on the poor innocent child, Walter, who, by some means most unwittingly had contributed to the

loss of her lover. She confessed to having twice taken the child to the top of the crag on which the old tower is built, intending to cut its throat with a pair of scissors, and to conceal the body in the adjoining marshy ground, but fortunately her courage had failed her at the critical moment, or some accidental circumstance had occurred to prevent the crime, and in a moment of contrition, she hurried to the old gentleman, Sir Walter's grandfather, and, renouncing her charge, confessed her criminal intention, and fled from that quarter of the country, and what her after fate had been, he never had learned. In the course of her distraction, however, she had managed to inflict an injury upon him by letting him fall among some stones, from whence he conceived that much of his lameness had arisen, a circumstance which had influenced his future life in so far that a sedentary profession was the only one for which he was considered suitable. Accordingly the profession of his father, who was a Writer to the Signet, was his first destination, and ultimately the Scottish Bar, although a contingency had at one time very nearly taken place which would have sent him on a very different course. When it was proposed to send the late Lord Melville to India as Governor-General, Scott was engaged to accompany him as Secretary, but matters had turned out otherwise, and as he thought, much more fortunately for him than he had any reason

to expect ; he rejoiced, he said, in not having gone to India even in the high situation in which it was proposed to have placed him.

[1819.]

DEAR SKENE,—I have not young Gordon's address at hand at this moment, but I will endeavour to send him to you to-morrow at the hour appointed. He is as deaf as a post, and talks pure Aberdeenshire, but in a murmur—an excellent and gentlemanlike creature.—Yours ever,  
W. S.

This note refers to a young man whom Sir Walter had very much befriended.<sup>1</sup> He is the son of Major Pryse Gordon, and had the misfortune to be so afflicted with deafness as to disappoint his expectations in the profession for which he had been educated, which was that of the Church. When he was upon one occasion unexpectedly called upon to preach a sermon, which might have been the means of advancing his interest, Sir Walter was kind enough to compose and write one for him, which was afterwards printed, and which affords a singular proof of the versatility of Sir Walter's talent and the readiness of composition which characterises his books throughout, however foreign the subject may be to the usual train of his study ; not that subjects of devotion were in any respect uncongenial to his mind, which was

<sup>1</sup> G. Huntly Gordon, for whom Scott wrote two sermons, afterwards sold by Gordon for £250, and published under the title of *Religious Discourses by a Layman*.

sufficiently shown by the pious and reverential turn of his sentiments, apparent in his works and more strongly indicated still when in the common intercourse of life any occasion called forth an expression of his habitual feelings in that respect. How Mr. Gordon became recommended to Sir Walter, I am not aware, but this note refers to his having asked me to procure some employment for him as an amanuensis. Sir Walter afterwards had him for a long time at Abbotsford to make a catalogue of the library, and afterwards to classify and prepare an index for Sir Walter's very voluminous correspondence. He was never employed in the capacity of Secretary, which I have understood he was disposed to insinuate: his deafness rendered him quite unfit for that purpose, even had Sir Walter wished to employ an amanuensis, which he never did, except in his later years, when a numbness in his fingers, consequent upon the complaint which for some time threatened to assail him, rendered it necessary, and he was then in the habit of dictating to Mr. William Laidlaw, a man of very superior talent and information, in whose discretion Sir Walter would confidently repose, and who, residing as land steward at Abbotsford, was always at hand. But even Mr. Laidlaw's assistance in this respect was rarely resorted to, as Sir Walter was always in the habit himself of putting his compositions on paper, nor am I aware that he ever dictated any of his letters, even after his

hand had become enfeebled, and his writing consequently not very legible, when an amanuensis might have been desirable.

EDINBURGH, *25th December 1819.*

SIR,—The honour of your attending the funeral of Mrs. Scott, my mother, from her house in George Street, to the new burying-ground at St. John's Chapel, on Wednesday the 29th current, at two o'clock, is requested by, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

JAMES SKENE, Esq.

This letter announces the death of Mrs. Scott, Sir Walter's mother, to whom he was most devotedly attached, and who, to judge from the frequent opportunities I had of seeing them together, felt a boundless affection for 'Wattie, my lamb,' as she generally accosted him. She was a woman of very superior talents and acquirements joined to an unaffected kindliness of manner, an inexhaustible store of anecdote and agreeable conversation, which she had transmitted in full perfection to her son, and which most likely, had her circumstances been cast in a different course from the homely routine in which her life had been spent, would have rendered her a very conspicuous person. Much of Sir Walter's taste for poetry, and much of his legendary lore, had been supplied from the taste and retentive memory of this excellent old lady. She was struck with palsy at the age of eighty-seven, and although become quite speechless,

she showed an anxious solicitude to have her son by her bedside. After a few days, when her physician desired that she should be kept perfectly quiet, for some time she fixed a wistful gaze on the countenance of Mrs. Scott, then at her bedside, and afterwards directed her eyes anxiously towards the door. Mrs. Scott, judging that she meant to indicate a desire to see her son, sent for him. When he arrived the old lady's countenance beamed joy; for some time she pressed his hand in silence, patted his cheek, and then solemnly placing her hand on the crown of his head, seemed for some time to struggle for utterance, but failing in the attempt, turned her face to the wall, and closed her eyes, and when he asked her if she wished him to remain or to go and return again soon, she shook her head slowly, as if she had meant to say, 'You have received my last blessing, and with it I now give up all connection with this world,' and in this tranquil state of abstraction she remained two days, and then expired.

She was the sister of Dr. Rutherford of Edinburgh, a distinguished member of the great constellation of men of talent at that time existing in this city, a profound scholar and a most agreeable man. That most accomplished paragon of the old Scottish Lady, Mrs. Murray Keith, was an intimate friend of Mrs. Scott, and in many respects, although it had been the fate of the former to move in a more distinguished circle,

they much resembled each other in the substantial qualities of talent, information, and the agreeable manner they both had of communicating it. To Mrs. Murray Keith Sir Walter was indebted for the groundwork of *The Bride of Lammermoor* and much of the *Chronicles of the Canon-gate*, and to his mother for much of the *Minstrelsy* and historical anecdotes of remarkable persons which are interwoven throughout his work. Many of them I have heard the old lady narrate, but I think the following has not been made use of by Sir Walter, unless it be by analogy in one of the characters of *Guy Mannering* or *Redgauntlet*.

Murray of Broughton was Secretary to Prince Charles Edward in his unfortunate attempt to regain the British throne, and after the final overthrow of that enterprise, and dispersion of all those who had been engaged in it, Murray was among the number of those taken by the victorious party. From the conspicuous situation which he had held, he was aware that his chance of escaping execution was but small: he therefore determined to save his life by becoming informer against his former comrades in arms. Under the influence therefore of this ignoble resolution, he freely divulged to a vindictive Government the names, and so far as he knew, the retreats of all those implicated, and consequently he became the cause of the suffering of many who might otherwise have escaped. For this conduct he became the object of universal contempt and of implacable



hatred to the great portion of the Scottish who still favoured that unfortunate cause. One evening, long after the events in which this personage had acted so base a part, Mrs. Scott's family were at tea in their house in George Square, when a gentleman was announced as desiring to see Sir Walter's father ; as the conference seemed to last long, Mrs. Scott sent her son down to offer a cup of tea to the gentleman. Entering his father's business room, he found him in conversation with an elderly, but very erect-looking grey-haired gentleman wrapped in a large cloak. He seemed startled at Walter's entrance, but upon the object being explained, accepted the proffered cup of tea with graceful politeness. He had come to consult Mr Scott about the state of his pecuniary affairs in Scotland. When he had retired Mr. Scott deliberately took up the cup and saucer, and opening the window, dashed them into the street, to his son's very great surprise, saying : ' No honest lips shall use that cup after it has served those of a traitor. That, Walter, was the notorious Murray of Broughton, by whose treachery so many brave patriots and worthy men suffered.'<sup>1</sup>

ABBOTSFORD, Sunday, *September* 1819.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I was at Melville for two days and had intended to call upon you, but I was too much hurried for the only hour I was in town. I have written to Lizars to send you a

<sup>1</sup> The story is told by Lockhart.

proof of his engraving and attend to any alterations which your good skill may recommend. On the whole I think his effort is very creditable. I do not intend to have the prints thrown off till I come to town in November. My health continues very good indeed, rather better than it has been for several years, but I cannot write very long at a time without feeling a very disagreeable aching pain in my back. I shall be condemned to use an amanuensis, which is grievous work for one accustomed to independence. I wish you would come and see us now the weather is like to be favourable for exercise, and we will waken Newark Hill once more with the greyhounds. I was at Langholm Lodge the other day. What a change since we saw Lord and Lady Dalkeith there, the one in full strength, the other in all the bloom of beauty, with a fine family, of whom two, with themselves, are now in the grave!

Adieu, my dear Skene; the more friends one loses, the dearer they ought to be who remain behind, and you are one of those whom I have every reason to value most highly. I beg compliments to Mrs. Skene; I need not say how happy we will be to see her if she can come with you. We have the Macleods with us here at this moment, but they leave us soon.—Yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

Monday [*December 1819*].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I daresay Count Iterburg and Mons. de Polier would be gratified by what you propose; at any rate, if you will take the trouble to offer them your escort, they cannot but be obliged by having it placed within their power.  
—Yours truly,

W. S.

The ex-Crown Prince of Sweden is the subject of this note. This interesting young man had arrived in Edinburgh with his tutor, Baron Polier of Lausanne, in the autumn of 1819 with a view to the prince attending the Classes of the University, for which purpose he assumed the title of Count Iterburg, but this incognito did not answer the intended purpose; his illustrious rank having soon become known, he became so much the object of notice as to find his attendance at college irksome, and he very soon confined himself to private lessons from masters in those sciences he meant to cultivate. He was at that time a tall, handsome young man of nineteen, of a fair complexion, and a countenance possessing a very strong resemblance to the portraits of his great ancestor, Charles XII. of Sweden. The Earl of Liverpool, head of the Ministry, had written to Sir Walter Scott requesting him to show attention to the prince, and to make his reception in Edinburgh as agreeable as possible consistently with the privacy he wished to observe. In the discharge of this duty Sir Walter engaged my assistance, feeling that, although he could read several of the foreign languages well enough, he possessed so little freedom in expressing himself either in French or German as to render his intercourse with foreigners somewhat more a matter of restraint than was either agreeable to himself, or useful to them.

The prince dined with Sir Walter Scott the day after his arrival, and he and his friend made

themselves as agreeable as their very slender acquaintance with the English language at that time enabled them. Sir Walter happened to possess a portrait of Charles XII. of Sweden, which hung over the dining-room fireplace; the prince was much struck, and apparently gratified with the circumstance, as he obviously conceived that it had been placed there as a compliment to him, and the company present were equally impressed with the remarkably striking family likeness between the portrait of the warrior king and his present representative. Some time after this, when he did me the honour to dine at my table, he was equally interested in a set of portraits of the two last generations of the Royal Family of Scotland, which hung in my dining-room, and which had been presented to my grandfather by Prince Charles Edward in consideration of the sacrifices he made for the prince's service in the unfortunate enterprise of the year 1745, when he raised and commanded one of the battalions of Lord Lewis Gordon's brigade. The portrait of Prince Charles Edward, painted at about the same age as that of Count Iternburg, and, no doubt also, the marked analogy in the circumstances to which they had each been reduced, seemed much to engage his notice, and when the ladies had retired, he begged me to give him some account of the rebellion of 1745, and of the various endeavours of the ex-family of Stuart to regain the Scottish crown. The subject was rather a comprehensive

one, but when I had done my best to put him in possession of the leading features, it seemed to have taken a very strong hold of his mind, as he frequently reverted to the subject at our subsequent meetings. Upon another occasion, when I had the honour of his company at dinner, and by degrees the topic of conversation had slipped into its wonted channel, the rebellion of the 1745, its final disaster and the singular escape of the prince from the pursuit of his enemies during many weeks, the Count inquired what effect the failure of the enterprise had upon the prince's character, with whose gallant bearing and enthusiasm in the conduct of his desperate enterprise he evinced the strongest interest and sympathy. I related briefly the mortifying disappointments to which Charles Edward was afterwards exposed in France and the other events of his life, the hopelessness of his cause, and the indifference generally shown to him by the Continental Courts, which so much preyed upon his spirits as finally to stifle every remnant of his former spirit and character, and to reduce him to listless indifference, which terminated in his becoming a sot during the latter years of his life. On turning round to the prince, who had been listening to these details, I perceived the big drops chasing each other down his cheeks, so that we changed the subject, and he never again recurred to it. If fate should ever place him in a situation to testify the vigour of his own char-

acter in striving to regain the crown of which the eccentricities of his father deprived him, I shall be mistaken if Prince Gustavus does not exhibit a character becoming the illustrious names which preceded him on the throne of Sweden. I mentioned to him that my grandfather had taken refuge in Gothenburg after the fatal defeat at Culloden, and that having remained many years in exile in Sweden, he had been naturalised and had obtained a patent of nobility which was still in my custody. He desired to see it, and was much pleased to find that it had been preserved ; it was from his grandfather, whose signature he at once recognised, and he was good enough to dictate the literal translation of the deed, while I wrote it down, and then he said with a smile : ‘ Should it ever be my fate to regain my father’s crown, I beg that this patent may be presented, that I may have the pleasure of directing your name to be inscribed in the list of the nobles of my kingdom.’

The prospect of his becoming eventually engaged in a struggle for the attainment of that great object was obviously ever uppermost in his mind ; all his pursuits seemed to tend that way, and he had imposed upon himself a species of training to fit his habits and constitution for the hardships and endurance he might have occasion to exercise. He practised athletic exercises and the use of all kinds of arms ; he rode well, and in order to inure himself to exposure in

bad weather, he often set off in dark stormy nights to find his way across country, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot, to the great annoyance of his friend and tutor, Baron Polier. He studied particularly to acquire a knowledge of military affairs, which I understand to have been the unremitting and anxious pursuit of his after life, in the Austrian service, in which he has been raised to high rank.

Before preparing to quit Edinburgh the prince consulted me one day on the subject of presenting Sir Walter Scott with some memento. As Sir Walter had just at that time been created a Baronet, and was engaged in devising his coat of arms, of which I had made a sketch, it occurred to me that if the prince were to get a seal cut with this new device, I would manage to prevent Sir Walter from supplying himself otherwise. The plan was accordingly adopted, and a beautiful amethyst having been obtained, it was correctly engraved, and inscribed on one side of the setting with the donor's name, 'Gustaf'; on the opposite, 'To Sir Walter Scott,' according to directions from Baron Polier. In the meantime Sir Walter had gone to Abbotsford, where the prince was to pay him a visit, and Mrs. Skene and myself were to be of the party. The morning after our arrival he took the opportunity of finding Sir Walter alone in the breakfast parlour to present the seal, and he was just making acknowledgments as I entered the room. He held the

seal out to me to admire its beauty, when the prince, laughing, said, 'There is no occasion to show it to Mr. Skene, for it is to him I am indebted for any merit it may possess.' He had sent to me one of his books as a keepsake. The seal was the one which Sir Walter constantly used during the remainder of his life, and he valued it very much for the sake of the donor, of whom he entertained a high opinion, and he often adverted to the simple inscription as a testimony of regard of which he felt proud.

As he was desirous of seeing whatever was interesting in Scotland before quitting the country, I was at pains to prepare a suitable route, and to obtain for him such introductions as might be useful, and with a view to his witnessing the hospitality of a Highland chief, I induced the prince to visit my brother-in-law, Glengarry, who accordingly gave him a reception with which he afterwards told me, when I saw him in Germany, he had been highly gratified. Glengarry, after the old Highland fashion, awaited his arrival at the boundary of his property, accompanied by a numerous following in the full Highland garb, with bagpipes, broadswords and targets, and a barrel of whisky. The unexpected appearance of the warlike retinue by which the pass through which they had to penetrate was closely invested the screaming of the pipes, and the wild shouts of the people, the prince confessed, perplexed them not a little at first, as they could not account



for it, knowing the distance they had still to go before reaching Glengarry. However, the worthy chief soon removed their doubts by advancing to receive them with that kind and dignified manner for which he was remarkable, and explaining in due form the meaning of the Gaelic welcomes which were shouted by the surrounding followers, they proceeded on their way like a Highland army. They were received at the house by the young Laird, surrounded also by his following in the Highland garb, and the neighbourhood was informed of the event by repeated salvos from the wall-pieces of the old castle. The prince was much pleased with this visit, which afforded him an opportunity of witnessing in such perfection the peculiarities of Highland manners and hospitality, which he said he would never forget, and also of learning many anecdotes of the enthusiastic devotion of the Highlanders to the young representative of their ancient sovereigns, when he threw himself unprotected and unattended upon their loyalty, which touched my young friend in a sensible part.

From the Highlands they proceeded to make the tour of Ireland, whence, learning my intention to go abroad on account of the then delicate state of Mrs. Skene's health, the prince and his friend sent me numerous letters of introduction, amongst others one to the Queen of Sweden, residing at that time at Baden, to be delivered in case the prince, her son, should not happen to be there at the time.

In the course of the ensuing winter, when I had established myself at Aix in Provence with a portion of my family, I was honoured by a visit from Duke William of Baden, cousin-german of Prince Gustavus, then travelling for the recovery of his health, which had suffered from a severe wound received when in command of a division of the combined army under Prince Schwartzenberg.

He mentioned his having been commissioned by his cousin to express how sensible he was of the kindness and attention shown to him in Scotland, and from the Queen, his mother, a desire that we should not fail to take Baden on our return to Scotland, where she would be happy to see us, which accordingly we decided to do. The Duke talked quite frankly of the confidence entertained by the friends of the Swedish family that circumstances would sooner or later occur to enable them to be restored to their kingdom, and the dispositions and talents of the Crown Prince (who had now dropped the assumed name of Comte Iterburg) gave them the greatest hopes.<sup>1</sup>

CASTLE STREET, Tuesday Night [1819].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have looked over the Memoir in which I have had only occasion to mark one or two passages as being perhaps something too flowing for a publication of the sort.

<sup>1</sup> Under the title of Prince Wasa he rose to high command in the Austrian army.

All that you say is true and well said, and if people only want to have their attention called to the subject, you can show capitalists inclined to speculate in this line where their interest lies.

The concern is, however, a large one, and you cannot expect that it will speedily be ventured upon. In fact, men who have actually money in their pouches seldom run far in these experiments until time has shown them where the profit lies. Those who form the readiest adventurers are men who, lacking the feu, must build and sell their houses before they are brought home.

This was written when your note came. Assuredly if we are all well, Mrs. Scott and I will meet you on the 25th. I do not wish to protract the formal observances of mourning beyond the proper and decorous period, and I will be glad to make yours the first house I go to.—Most truly yours,  
WALTER SCOTT.

If you will call on me to-morrow at-half past one, we will give a glance at the paper together.

This letter was written soon after Mrs. Scott's death, and the latter part refers to that event. The first part is in regard to a Memorial I had prepared for publication on the subject of an extensive plan of opening part of my property in Aberdeenshire with a view to building.

ABBOTSFORD, MELROSE, 29th August 1820.

MY DEAR SKENE.—It is a sad thing that you are obliged to begin your rambles again, but prevention is easier than cure, and much as I shall feel your absence, and that of my much-esteemed friend Mrs. Skene, I must comfort myself by

thinking that you are amused both of you, and her health strengthened and confirmed. If I take the Continent, which I should wish greatly, I will not fail to direct my course so as to insure our meeting, for you will scarce choose a nook in the Continent where I will not poke you out. We have had Ken with us, who with very infirm health has as much whim and originality as ever.<sup>1</sup> I am sorry you will not be in Edinburgh when we visit it next week. He is now at the Laird of Harden's. The specimen of lithography is capital, but when shall we set about our '*Antiquitates Reekianæ*'? When indeed? Meanwhile I hope you will not fail to add to your stock of drawings whatever memorables may occur in your travels. The etching was very clever indeed. God bless you, my dear Skene, your excellent partner and your family, and send us a speedy and a happy meeting. All here, Lockharts included, send kindest regards.—I am very truly and affectionately yours,  
WALTER SCOTT.

Previous to setting out on the journey alluded to in the foregoing pages, I received this valedictory letter from Sir Walter in which he expresses a desire, for some time in possession of his mind, of making a continental tour of some length, in which I had engaged to accompany him, but circumstances prevented its accomplishment at that time. He was deeply engaged in the composition of his romances, which had begun to yield a large income, and to justify the expensive operations he had undertaken in forming his new residence at Abbotsford. He

<sup>1</sup> Henry Mackenzie.

mentioned to me as early as this period, when he had been little more than five years engaged in literary production, that the proceeds had already reached £50,000, and that he felt it to be his duty not to omit the opportunity of establishing the fortune of his family so long as that fickle resource of public taste favoured his endeavours. And however much he took delight in the progress of his improvements, the singular absence of mind which began now to exhibit itself, showed how very much his mind was engaged in the labours of his study. During his absence on one occasion, the new furnishing of his drawing-room had taken place, of which he seemed altogether unconscious upon his return, and he continued for some time to occupy the room without observing that any change had taken place, until Lady Scott, who had been anticipating the agreeable surprise she had prepared for him, called his attention to it. But a more amusing instance of preoccupation of mind occurred while he was attending the circuit at Jedburgh. He had an aunt, a Mrs. Curle,<sup>1</sup> who lived in that town, and to whom he never failed upon these occasions to pay a visit, but upon this occasion the old lady happened to have changed her abode, of which Sir Walter had been informed; but old habit led him instinctively to her former residence, which was

<sup>1</sup> 'Poor Aunt Curle died like a Roman. . . . She turned every one out of the room, and drew her last breath alone.'—Letter to Thomas Scott, January 1826.

then in the occupation of another old lady, a total stranger to Sir Walter. Lady Scott and the late Mr. Solicitor-General Wedderburn happened to walk with him to the door, and he invited them to join him and see his aunt. The lady who occupied the house proved to be at home, but in age and appearance she was altogether the reverse of Mrs. Curle, who was a stout, burly-looking personage, well advanced in life. Nevertheless, Sir Walter saluted, as he entered, a wan-looking, shrivelled old maid, with ‘How do you do, my dear aunt?’ She rose in some confusion to receive her unexpected guests, and although Lady Scott, being at once aware of the mistake, strove to undeceive him, he proceeded to embrace the astonished old maiden, who was quite at a loss to comprehend the cause or meaning of these demonstrations of kindness, to which she had been probably but little habituated, till, when he addressed her again as his aunt, Lady Scott told him that it was not Mrs. Curle. He was much embarrassed when he became aware of the mistake, and made the best apology he could, but I observed afterwards that he never liked this story to be alluded to.

The friend he speaks of in this letter was Mr. Stewart Rose, author of many very elegant works, at whose residence in the New Forest I had recently passed a most agreeable week.

The ‘*Antiquitates Reekianæ*’ was a joint undertaking of Sir Walter’s and mine, illustrative of

the ancient history, manners and antiquities of Edinburgh, but the necessity of my going abroad at that time delayed its appearance, and before I returned at the lapse of a year and a half, circumstances had occurred altogether to prevent its publication. The drawings I had prepared for the purpose had been seen, and the delay gave time for the idea to be taken up and turned to use by others, without, however, the only part of the scheme which would probably have given it merit in the public eyes, the narrative part from Sir Walter's pen.

ABBOTSFORD, Saturday, *December 1821.*

MY DEAR SKENE,—I am truly sorry I have an engagement with the Lockharts which prevents my dining with you on Monday as you kindly proposed. I could surely have broken short with them, but I believe they are to have company. I hope J. Boz<sup>1</sup> comes to make some stay, but shall scarce forgive him not coming here in the fine season. My best love to him. I shall be most anxious to see him. Compliments to Mrs. Skene. —Always most truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Simple as this note may appear, it brings with it a varied crowd of recollections of years of early friendships, and of the melancholy termination in which they closed. Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck and his brother, Mr. James Boswell, the person alluded to in the note, had been my

<sup>1</sup> James Boswell.

schoolfellows and long my intimate friends; we lived much together, both in England and Scotland. They were both men of remarkable talents, and James, a man of great learning, author of an edition of Shakespeare. Both of them evinced a dash of their father's eccentricity, but joined to greater talent. Sir Walter took great pleasure in their society, but as James resided in London, the opportunity of enjoying his company had of late been rare. Upon the present occasion he had dined with me in the greatest health and spirits, the evening before his departure for London, and in a week we had accounts of his having been seized by a sudden illness which carried him off, and in a few weeks more his brother, Sir Alexander, was killed in a duel occasioned by a foolish political lampoon which he had written, and in a thoughtless moment suffered to find its way into a newspaper.<sup>1</sup>

In company with the two Boswells I had made the tour of Wales and of a considerable portion of England, after having passed six rather riotous weeks at Oxford with the friends of James Boswell, then a member of Brazenose College, in high reputation for his talents as well as for his agreeable and most eccentric manners. Upon the same occasion we also passed a week at Clifton in visiting the venerable ex-king of Corsica, General Paoli, the friend of their father.

<sup>1</sup> The *Glasgow Sentinel*.



JEDBURGH, 21st April 1822.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I received yours on my way to the Circuit. I have plenty of room, and will be delighted to received Colin and you either on Tuesday or Wednesday. Come either day before five—you cannot come amiss—and stay as long as you can.

I am grieved to say I must decline the swan, for my loch is, you know, debatable between Nicol Milne and me, and as he ploughs and reaps in the vicinity, he would object with some reason to my putting on the swan. I shall be very sorry if his *Cantus* should be the consequence of my refusal; pray let a bad pun save his life. It is a shame the Keeper of the *Cygnets* should destroy a *Swan*.

In hopes of a merry meeting with said Keeper and you, I always am very truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

My brother-in-law, Mr. Colin Mackenzie, is the person here mentioned, then deputy-keeper of the King's Signet in Scotland. Sir Walter, to whom he had offered a swan for his lake at Abbotsford, which circumstances prevented him from accepting at the time, hopes it will not be the death-warrant of the swan, supposed to perform his own requiem on the eve of departure, and that a keeper of the *Cygnets* must of necessity be merciful to a *Swan*.

CASTLE STREET, Saturday Morning [May 1822].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I am very hastily summoned to Abbotsford, which prevents my seeing Mr. Raeburn till I return. My carts are to be in

town with lambs for the market on Wednesday. Would it not be possible to get the stones down so as to return with said carts on Thursday? If so, I know it can only be through your active mediation. I beg the expense of scaffolding, etc., may not be considered, but that your men will get them down in the way safest for the workmen and the reliques. I will see Mr. Raeburn, whom I am plundering thus unmercifully, the instant I return.—Yours very truly, W. SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Monday.

MY DEAR COLIN,—I am happy to feel quite at liberty to accept the Lord of the Lake, as my neighbour readily and willingly agrees to protect him. I send this letter in some anxiety, lest the reprieve should come too late, and will send for the bird on Friday a careful person with a pony. I hope he will like his new dominions.

Mr. Milne expects for his house, wholly unfurnished, but with garden and rickyard, £70, which is something high, but not altogether unreasonable. The house is to be completely *painted and repaired*, four-stalled stable and accommodation for a carriage, etc., appended. Mr. Milne engages to put no cattle into the paddocks around the house, or to let it if desired on reasonable terms. Will you let Skene know all this, as I conclude this will find him still with you. Mr. Milne will let a lease for five years. I think if it suits Skene to have a place at all, he will scarce find one more congenial to his habits—all walks, etc., to be open to them. I said nothing of shooting. Pray let Skene let me know in a day or two if he makes up his mind.—Always, my dear Colin, most truly yours, WALTER SCOTT.

If I were a Catholic I would have Masses said

for the soul of Wattie Ross, who saved these stones by stealing them.

ABBOTSFORD, *8th May* 1822.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Your valued letter reached me yesterday. I think I shall adopt your plan for the garden, with an addition of my own, which I will communicate at meeting.

I send three carts to-morrow for the stones, and I will desire the men to receive directions from you. I will also write to Mr. Raeburn, to whom I am much obliged, but I must be burthensome to you to give the men their directions. I wish much to see them before I go away to arrange where they may be used. The carts and men can wait your convenience.

I find Mr. Milne is in town. He lives very near the Gibbet toll. Perhaps you had better communicate with him personally or by your agent, mentioning that you are the party concerning whom I spoke to him. I do not think the rent much out of the way, though £60 or £65 would be more germane to the matter. Candlemas is an unusual term for entry, and I know not how he will like to have the place lie three-quarters of a year on his hand; not well certainly. If he can help himself to the break, I think he will have no objection. When houses are let unfurnished, the tenant pays taxes. It strikes me you should have a plan to put up a gardener's cottage at Faldenside, for example. Mr. Milne seems anxious to settle, and I think you may be even with him in the course of half-an-hour's conversation.

If Sir Robert Dundas be well and hearty, I intend to stay here for two days after the Session begins.—Yours truly, WALTER SCOTT.

The swan arrived safe and is in beautiful feather.

Of the reliques which Mr. Raeburn's kindness has induced me to expect, I think you said the window was what he especially prized, and of course I do not wish to trespass upon his generosity further than consists with his own purposes. The door will be invaluable to me, so will the heads; the window is also acceptable, but less so than the carved stones, as I have less means of disposing of it.

Sir Walter, in decorating the new mansion of Abbotsford, had collected from all quarters whatever sculptured stones or inscriptions from old Scottish buildings could be procured to insert in the walls, and as most of these are in some respect historical, he took great delight in narrating the events and history of the persons to which they referred. He procured from the Magistrates of Edinburgh, at the time when the old prison-house of the city (The Heart of Midlothian) was pulled down, as much of the stones of the entrance tower as enabled him to erect it, with its sculptured doorway and the ponderous prison keys, as the entrance to the kitchen at Abbotsford. There is a memorial also of the 'Souters of Selkirk,'<sup>1</sup> and various inscriptions and sculptured coats of arms around the walls. For the same purpose I had obtained for Sir Walter the fine old Gothic door-

<sup>1</sup> In conferring the freedom of the burgh of Selkirk, four or five bristles, such as are used by shoemakers, are attached to the burgess seal, and these the new-made burgess must dip in his wine in token of respect for the Souters of Selkirk, who died on the battlefield of Flodden.

way of what was called the 'Black Turnpike,' an ancient mansion in the High Street of Edinburgh, which had been pulled down when the South Bridge was built; and also by the kindness of Sir Henry Raeburn, I procured some still more valuable relics of that description in the series of sculptured portraits of the kings of Scotland which ornamented the ancient cross of Edinburgh, removed some fifty years ago from the site it had for centuries occupied, the dumb witness of more important events than perhaps any spot in the kingdom, and in itself a stately edifice becoming the dignity of the metropolis of which it was the centre. Nevertheless, this venerable memorial of former days, although it stood in a place so open as not to create the slightest interruption, became the victim of the ignorant indifference and fidgety conceit of the civic functionaries of the day, who, after they had pulled it down, were at a loss how to dispose of the materials to the best account. The pillar which rose from the centre of the octagon substructure was disposed of to the proprietor of the neighbouring estate, where it still continues to do duty as a decoration to the pleasure-grounds of that place. The other sculptured portions, comprehending the armorial bearings of the city, the portraits of the kings and other smaller morsels, became a prey to the ingenious device of a whimsical character of that day. Mr. Walter Ross, W.S., was constructing a villa at Stockbridge, which was to be under the

apparent protection of a sort of mock fortress he had reared upon a mound in the adjoining garden, and for this purpose had cast a covetous eye on the materials of the old cross, then lying in ruins, until the wiseacres of the Town Council, who had so inconsiderately pulled it down, should determine as to the disposal. Mr. Ross solved the difficulty by this ingenious device. At midday, when it could not escape public notice, he sent his carts containing some rubbish of stones and bricks which were emptied down beside the cross. An officer was forthwith despatched by the magistrates to complain of so extraordinary a proceeding, and to desire the rubbish to be again removed from the street. Mr. Ross avowed his mistake and remorse, and promised obedience, which, however, it was not convenient for him to perform until it had become dusk. And it so happened that in the meantime his rubbish had formed acquaintance with all the portraits and sculptured stones, and in the morning it appeared that they had all taken their departure in company, and were soon after discovered decorating Mr. Ross's garden fortress.

Sir Henry Raeburn became proprietor of the villa in question, which has been since entirely covered with town buildings, and in the course of removing the tower, I obtained the relics of the cross for Abbotsford, where they are now employed in the decoration of the cloister which surrounds the court.

The latter part of the letter refers to my intention of taking a lease of a residence in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, which did not, however, take effect.

ABBOTSFORD, 8th May 1822.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I enclose a letter to Raeburn. Will you be kind enough to give the bearer, the captain of the carts whom I have sent on this foray, a word of direction about the mode of delivery, etc. I need scarce request you will be as moderate as possible in your exactions from Mr. Raeburn's kindness, which means in broad Scotch, take as much as you can get.—Yours ever truly,  
W. SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Monday, 14th May 1822.

MY DEAR SKENE,—The stones, thanks to your activity and Mr. Raeburn's liberality, arrived in perfect safety and were most acceptable. I have found yeoman's service for the niche and doorway, which will come in capitally. Our motions for Edinburgh are delayed on Sir Robert's kindly taking my duty for the week, which allows me to see some delicate arches executed about the building. We only come to town Thursday sennight, when we are engaged to the Lockharts. Have at your mutton any day you like after.

You had better see Milne soon; he is a close dealer, but a safe one. That is, he will make a hard bargain, but be true to what he promises. Pen and ink though, should you come to close quarters, are not amiss. *Scripta manent* saith the Scholiast.

I beg you will tell Colin how beautifully his swan promenades in the loch. We have dubit [dubbed] him Sir Lancelot of the Lake, and he

comes to us for bread as natural as a pet lamb. I must look out for a wife to him, however, that he may not be alone in his watery domains. I am very glad I saved so beautiful a creature. Yet he has a most ungainly frown at times when the presence of a dog exasperates his rougher propensities.—Love to Mrs. Skene. I am always, most truly yours.

WALTER SCOTT.

CASTLE STREET, Sunday, 1822.

MY DEAR SKENE,—The Morton papers, a most secret collection, are at present in my hands by Lady Morton's courtesy. Sharpe dines with me to-day at five to look over them. Pray come to this antiquarian banquet and bring the lady *sans façon*.—Yours ever.

WALTER SCOTT.

The Morton papers alluded to are a valuable collection of family documents, and many papers of historical interest connected with the period of Regent Morton are still in possession of the family. The settlements of the last earl had unfortunately put it into the power of his widow to alienate many of the valuable heirlooms of that ancient family. The interesting old library, the family plate, and many of the pictures, which ought to have been suffered to pass to the representative of the earldom, were disposed of in London, and the family papers, generally valuable for their historical interest, had nearly shared the same fate, and had with that view been put into Sir Walter's hands in order that he might estimate their value. Means were, however, found to have them preserved to the family.



[1822.]

DEAR SKENE,—A man has brought a chair which he calls John Knox's. It is an ugly one and does not suit me, but if its pedigree can be ascertained, perhaps the Antiquaries may choose to have it.—Yours truly. W. SCOTT.

I want a chat with you much about my plans. Will you call at Raeburn's to-day, where I am to be at two o'clock.

CASTLE STREET, Monday [1822].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have to propose to you our friend Colin Mackenzie as a member of the Royal Society Club, and I beg you will put him upon the list as a candidate accordingly.—Believe me truly yours. WALTER SCOTT.

I hope to be down with the Club on Monday unless slued in the road.

This recommendation is addressed to me as Secretary of the Royal Society Club, an office I have continued to hold from its institution to the present time. During this time one-half of the original members have passed to their graves. The club consists of fifty of the principal members of the Royal Society, to which number it is limited: they dine together monthly during the Session of the Society, with a view to having an opportunity of introducing to the members any strangers of distinction who may be in town.

As my acquaintance with Mr. Croker, then Secretary to the Admiralty, was but slight, a small

request I had to make connected with my eldest son, then in the Navy, was forwarded by Sir Walter and granted.

JEDBURGH, 4th April [1823].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I received your parcel safe, and I have no doubt whatever that the ‘Reekianæ’ will answer, so very beautiful are the specimens you have supplied. Three hundred copies appears rather a large impression, but we will see what Constable says. The man of books is to be here on Wednesday or Thursday next, and I will take the opportunity to take his advice about it, for a man can no more be delivered of a book without a bookseller than a woman of a child without an *accoucheur*, and much trouble and risk is saved in both cases by having recourse to the first assistance. Constable and Dr. Hamilton are worth all the old women in the world.

Lockhart, I am sure, will not want good-will, but I doubt if his very excellent sketches are finished enough for publication. Charles Sharpe’s assistance would be truly invaluable, both in explanation and delineation.

I was greatly obliged indeed by your interesting suggestion about my hobby-horsical matters. I have, however, been led, upon much consideration, to abandon my plan of an iron palisade between the court and garden, and to substitute a screen of flat Gothic arches executed in freestone, supporting a light cornice of the same material, the vacant space of the arches to be filled up with cast iron in some simple but handsome forms, so as to represent, or rather to resemble the shafts and mullions of, a Gothic window. This screen will be a little in the outset, but it will save much heavier expense, for I have ascertained by putting

up a screen of deal to the height of nine feet that such a colonnade as I propose, with the flower-pots to be placed in the corner, will sufficiently throw back and conceal the height of the eastern wall, and consequently render it unnecessary to do more than open an entrance from it into the upper garden. For the garden and court will be in this way totally separated from each other in the spectacular imagination, whereas any slight iron paling would have rather brought forward than thrown back the east wall. I shall thus get rid of all the awkwardness of this eastern boundary and save myself the expense and trouble of doing anything more than striking a door through it; save myself also much expense in the conservatory, which, as by this plan it will be much out of view, may be made as plain as I shall find convenient.

I have desired Mr. Patterson, the ironfounder, to call on you and show you a sketch of the proposed screen or colonnade, or whatever you choose to call it. What I now want from you is a sketch of how the ironwork, now limited to that which is to fill up the arches, ought to be managed. There is no occasion for much actual massiveness or strength, where no violence will probably be attempted, but it should not be quite a bird's-cage neither.

I hope you intend to come to Abbotsford with Mrs. Skene and the youngster, and Missie, or one of them at least, this spring. We shall be at home the whole vacation, and, I need scarcely add, delighted to see you.

Here I am in the middle of the stupefaction of a Justice-air rendered doubly stupid by a total want of its appropriate amusements, horrors and hangings.—Yours ever,

WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Saturday January 3rd, 1823.

MY DEAR SKENE,—It is scarce worth postage to say what you must have reckoned on, that your letter is on its way to Croker with all the additional fervour which my intimacy can add to the very reasonable request which it contained, and which I sincerely hope will be granted.

My house here is finished in the shell, and looks like a Temple of Solomon, not that I insinuate any comparison between the founders. I think on the whole you will like it, for it is quite devoid of the ‘nipped foot and clipped foot’ air of a Scots Mansion, which grudges every farthing and every foot’s space. . . .<sup>1</sup> I hope you will see it in spring, and if possible arrange with neighbour Milne.

I bring your beautiful sketch-book to town with me, and am, with kindest love to Mrs. Skene, in which my wife and Anne sincerely join, ever yours,

W. SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Sunday [1821].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have given Constable the plates, and he seems much pleased with the plan of the ‘Reekianæ.’ All that I can do will be done, of course. He will hold communication with you on the subject himself. I conceive that it should be something that would pay your time and trouble.

I have perhaps given you trouble to no purpose about the iron screen, having almost determined to adopt a plan of my own, namely a screen composed of open arches of hewn stone filled up with cast-iron lattice and supporting a cornice on which earthen vases with flowers may be placed, one of

<sup>1</sup> Illegible.

the windows to open as a door. I sent Patterson a drawing of this per Friday's Blucher. The advantage is that, though dearer in itself, such a screen renders all further expense unnecessary by dividing the garden from the courtyard and throwing back the east wall. Indeed, while the garden itself is partially seen through the perforated screen, the top of it, supposing it nine feet high, will totally intercept the view of the wall behind, which will thus remain untouched. I have ascertained this by putting up boards to the desired height. All that will be necessary in that wall will be a flight of four steps up to an arched doorway, and we will build a break against the wall to make the archway seem more massive. I hope you understand all this, which is at least very simple.

Sophia's baby has a bad turn of this confounded influenza, which makes me rather uneasy—it is such a slight creature.

Yours, with kindest wishes and remembrances to your lady,  
W. SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, 13th April [1823].

MY DEAR SKENE,—You promised me a visit about this time, and in hopes you may be inclined to keep your word by such pleasing information, I beg to acquaint you that though there are not as yet many clean-run fish in the Tweed, there are plenty of kelts which rise freely to the fly, and I saw one of them hold a good fisher in play for half an hour yesterday. In addition to this sport I want your advice about my house, this great Babylon which I am building, and I want you besides, of all living, to look at a vacant mansion or two which I think might serve you for country quarters. I have no engagements and expect no

company, only on the 20th I go to Jedburgh for two days for the circuit. On the 30th I go for one day to an election for our collector. Pray come and oblige.—Affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Our kindest compliments attend Mrs. Skene.

The good fisher Sir Walter alludes to was our mutual friend Mr. Scrope of Boulton, then residing in the Pavilion, a small property near Abbotsford belonging to Lord Somerville, also our mutual friend, who had recently died in Switzerland. Both these gentlemen were expert salmon-fishers, with whom I had long been in the custom of competing in that art, and they were both men of superior accomplishments and most agreeable manners also, and of course much at Abbotsford.

ABBOTSFORD, 30th April [1823]

DEAR SKENE.—I enclose the introduction you wish for Stevenson and Sir Willie. But Turner's palm is as itchy as his fingers are ingenious, and he will, take my word for it, do nothing without cash, and anything for it. He is almost the only man of genius I ever knew who is sordid in these matters. But a sketch of the Bell Rock from so masterly a pencil would be indeed a treasure.

Suppose they try John Thomson of Duddingston, who of late has succeeded admirably in sea-views.

I am keeping well, but the necessity of taking some part in a d——d dirty Burgh contest<sup>1</sup> has

<sup>1</sup> An election of the Collector of Jedburgh.







worried me of late, and I must make this a short letter.—Yours ever, WALTER SCOTT.

I will be truly happy if Rae gets something good.

Sir Walter's own disposition was so free from the slightest taint of anything approaching to sordidness that he had an utter contempt for it in others, and he alludes pretty sharply to that failing in the character of Mr. Turner, the landscape-painter, to whom application was desired to be made for a frontispiece to the account of the building of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, of which Mr. Stevenson, civil engineer, was the editor, and Sir William Rae a great promoter.<sup>1</sup> The drawing of the Bell Rock, which Turner painted from a sketch of mine, was certainly a clever performance, but Sir Walter's prognostic as to the expense was amply fulfilled.

Sir Walter was again desirous to resume the idea of the 'Reekianæ,' but Mr. Constable's proposals, which were something of the wolf's division usual to booksellers, and often oppressive to the many authors who engage in such compacts, were not to be risked. The screen was executed according to the ideas conveyed in these letters, and forms one of the most striking features of Abbotsford. The interest which Sir Walter took in completing his residence, and in planting and laying out the grounds, was at this

<sup>1</sup> *An Account of the Bell Rock Lighthouse*, 4to, Edinburgh, 1824.

time of the greatest importance to his health; it compensated for the laborious exertions which his literary pursuits required for keeping up the quick succession of new compositions in which he was engaged. Whatever the weather might be, he seldom omitted a daily ramble among his young plantations, especially to a favourite glen upon the property, which, after he had planted it and constructed a walk through it, he was much delighted to find was the traditional scene of Thomas the Rhymer's amusing encounter with the Queen of the Fairies, which forms the subject of one of the Ballads of Minstrelsy. It is, in fact, close to the spot which still retains the name of the Eildon Tree at the western base of that beautiful three-headed hill with which it shares the name. A brawling stream<sup>1</sup> penetrates for upwards of two miles through this little glen, in general wild and rocky, and, now that it is planted, in many parts very romantic. Sir Walter often exulted in having been the discoverer and the improver of the natural beauties of this little solitude, where he delighted to pass his idle hours, and for those friends and visitors who could scramble, it was his show scene. He seemed never to tire of it, and was wont to croon over such parts of the Rhymer's legend as the scene recalled to his memory. Times innumerable have I accompanied him in this somewhat laborious walk, either alone or in

<sup>1</sup> The Bogle Burn (*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*).

company with his guests; it had, however, latterly become more difficult for him to get over the irregular ground, and the last time he was able to visit this, his favourite haunt, I had much difficulty in helping him through the glen. He was often reduced to scramble up the steeper parts on his hands and knees, having now but little reliance on the strength of his lame leg, and so laborious was it that he seemed to become aware that the effort had nearly exceeded his powers, and that it was likely to be the last attempt he might make. After some time passed in silence and thought, he addressed me with moistened eyes and in words which I shall not soon forget: 'Hey-hou, my dear Skene, this is not as it used to be; everything has its day, and that day is but short. We have enjoyed many a ramble here together, and I hope you may be spared to see this spot often again and to recollect the days that are gone by, but I doubt I must be content to say farewell to the Haxelcleugh.' And so indeed it proved; it was the last time he ventured so far, and I have never seen it since. On horseback, however, he was still able to go a good way, and one morning he proposed to me to explore the 'Nameless Dean,' which, under the name of 'Glendearg,' is made the subject of the *Monastery*. When we visited it, some years had passed since the publication of the romance where the wildness of the scene is so beautifully portrayed, and he said he felt very curious to

visit it, having never been there before; 'which,' he observed smiling, 'you may think droll enough; however, it is not the less true. I had conceived a sort of ghost story, and I felt unwilling that reality should interfere to disenchant the images.' It is a solitary moorland glen that follows the course of the Elvan Water, wild enough, but commanding a fine view of the distant Eildon hills. As we proceeded his remarks on the different aspect of nature from what his fancy had imagined were very amusing; but when we reached the confined hollow in which the glen terminates, he was altogether bothered to find a sort of confederacy of towers where he had supposed that of Colmslie to be predominant. However, there they were, like a group of old weather-beaten warriors, almost shoulder to shoulder, occupying the throat of a Highland pass. Colmslie is old, but the other two bore the date 1585, posterior to the era of the tale. He comforted himself by reflecting that the reality of the text in Glendearg was not positively infringed by the solitary mansion of his fancy having been multiplied into three.

Sir Walter was at this time very much distressed by the unexpected death of his intimate friend, Mr. William Erskine, Lord Kinnedder. Their friendship had existed from early life to the death of the Judge, who was a man of learning and accomplishments, and who possessed great taste and judgment in poetical composition. Sir

Walter was in the habit of consulting him in those matters more than any of his other friends, having great reliance upon his critical skill. The manuscripts of all his poems, and also of the earlier of his prose works, were submitted to Kinnedder's judgment, and a considerable correspondence on these subjects had taken place betwixt them, which would, no doubt, have constituted one of the most interesting series of letters Sir Walter left, and yet, I lament to say, they are probably the only series from his pen which has been unfortunately destroyed.

Lord Kinnedder was a man of retired habits, little known except to those with whom he lived on terms of intimacy, and by whom he was much esteemed; being naturally of a remarkably sensitive mind, he was altogether overthrown by a report having got abroad of some alleged indiscretions on his part in which a lady was also implicated. Whether the report had any foundation in truth or not I am altogether ignorant, but such an allegation, affecting a person in his situation in life as a Judge, and doing such violence to the susceptibility of his feelings, had the effect of bringing on a severe illness which in a few days terminated his life. I never saw Sir Walter so much affected by any event, and at the funeral, which he attended, he was quite unable to suppress his feelings, but wept like a child. The family, suddenly bereft of their protector, were young

orphans, their mother, a daughter of Professor John Robison,<sup>1</sup> having previously died, and they had also to struggle against embarrassed circumstances; neither had they any near relative in Scotland to take charge of their affairs. But a lady, Miss M., a friend of the family, was active in their service, and it so happened that in the course of arranging their affairs, the packet of letters from Sir Walter Scott containing the whole of his correspondence with Lord Kinnedder came into her hands, and she very soon discovered that the correspondence laid open the secret of the authorship of the Waverley Novels, at that period the subject of general and intense interest, and as yet unacknowledged by Sir Walter. She was in much perplexity what under these circumstances it was her duty to do, whether to replace the letters and suffer some accident to bring to light what the author seemed anxious might remain unknown, or to seal them up and keep them in her own custody undivulged, or finally to destroy them in order to preserve the secret. With, doubtless, the best and most upright motives, so far as her own judgment enabled her to decide in a matter in which she was unable to take advice without betraying what it was her object to respect, she came to the resolution, most unfortunately for the world, of destroying the letters. And accord-

<sup>1</sup> Author of *Elements of Mechanical Philosophy*.

ingly the whole of them were committed to the flames, depriving the descendants of Lord Kinnedder of a possession which could not fail to be much valued by them, and which in connection with Lord Kinnedder's letters to Sir Walter, which are doubtless preserved, would have been equally valuable to the public, as containing the contemporary opinions, prospects, views and sentiments under which these works were sent forth into the world. It would also have been curious to learn the unbiassed impressions which the different works created on the mind of such a man as Lord Kinnedder, before public opinion had suffused its influence over the opinions of people in general in this matter.

Sir Walter's fame had by this time become so generally spread throughout the world that few persons of any distinction came to Scotland without having previously provided themselves with the means of forming his acquaintance, and the extent of society and constant succession of recommendations to his attentions were often very burdensome, although it had its redeeming qualities in the number of distinguished and agreeable acquaintance it obtained for him. In these benefits I was accordingly a frequent sharer and acquired the acquaintance of many gifted persons of both sexes which otherwise I had little claim to obtain. Among the ladies was the authoress of *Plays on the Passions*, Miss Joanna

Baillie, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Hamilton, authoress of *Glenburnie*, etc., Miss Edgeworth, and the authoress of *Inheritance*.

The veteran poet Crabbe, that acute observer of mankind in the humble walks of life, Sir Humphry Davy, Mr. Croker, and many other characters distinguished in literature, passed some time with him, and during the period of King George iv.'s visit to Scotland there was, of course, a concourse of distinguished persons, by all of whom Sir Walter's society was much cultivated. At Abbotsford he had previously had a visit from Prince Leopold, now King of the Belgians, who passed the day there without any other society than that of Mrs. Skene and myself.

Sir Walter took a great share in the arrangements during King George's visit to Scotland, for which purpose a committee had been formed, consisting of the Lord Provost, First Bailie, Sir Walter Scott, Baron Clerk Rattray and myself, who met daily during the whole time as a Board of Green Cloth to issue instructions and take charge of all matters connected with His Majesty's reception, and a most laborious duty it was. For, independently of the public function, most of our houses were filled with friends. Such was the concourse that had assembled for the occasion that accommodation elsewhere was not to be obtained. This, joined to a constant turmoil of parties, made it a period of great excitement, which was finally crowned by the city banquet to His Majesty, given



in the great hall of the Parliament House, the most splendid scene I ever witnessed. Here the whole Peerage of Scotland sat at an elevated table at which His Majesty presided, having the Lord Provost on his right hand, and four other tables where the members of the committee had the duty of presiding, while the hall was hung with tapestry and the finest paintings that could be collected; but as a particular account of the whole proceedings was printed, there is no need to recall it here.

The two following letters allude to the intention of my eldest son to quit the Navy in which he had served a few years.

ABBOTSFORD, 1st May 1823.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Is your son so completely done with the sea that a very tempting opportunity will not place him again on the quarter-deck? The question will do no harm though the answer be affirmative. John Fergusson, one of the best trusted men alive, is just put into command of the *Mersey*, a 26-frigate, and goes down on the Spanish Main immediately. No country scarcely is so interesting as South America, and your son would be very particularly attended to. Fergusson asked me very kindly if I had any youngster to recommend, and your boy came into my head. If you think of it, write instantly, and I think you had better address Capt. Fergusson himself, 'Care of Sir Charles Ommanney, No. 22 Norfolk Street, Strand, London,' which will save some time.—Yours, in great haste to save post,

WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Monday [1823].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I just drop a line to say how

happy I will be to see you and your youngster on Thursday. Perhaps he is right in giving way to his personal feelings, at any rate you are certainly so. Kind compliments to Mrs. Skene. You will find my hobby in full canter.—Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

CASTLE STREET, 3 o'clock. [1823.]

MY DEAR SKENE,—I must throw myself on your mercy and ask you for a call instead of making one as I promised; the cause is a fit of weariness, which you, I am sure, will commiserate.—Yours truly,

W. SCOTT.

CASTLE STREET, 3 o'clock. [1823.]

DEAR SKENE,—As the day is bad and there can be no walking, Hope and I have settled to go dressed for dinner, and beg you will call for us in succession about *half-past three*. I cannot take my servant, owing to the arrival of Charles and a young friend, but I am quite prepared to do without attendance, which is at all times rather a bore to yours faithfully,

W. SCOTT.

Just come from Court, dripping wet.

My daughter Eliza (a great favourite of Sir Walter) having asked him to recommend a course of Scottish history, such as he thought would best suit her reading, he was kind enough to send her a letter, of which the following is a copy.

CASTLE STREET, 2nd December 1824.

I have been much pressed for time lately, my dear young friend, or I would not so long have neglected a letter so interesting as yours, and when I began to answer your simple and sensible

question, I assure you, my dear, I do not know, for excepting what is called Littleton's *Letters on English History* (in reality written by Goldsmith), and which you have read, I know no work on British history of an elementary nature. In ancient history you have Ferguson and Gibbon for the Roman history, and Mitford for that of Greece. But I believe you are rather looking to the history of Britain, and then I am pretty much at a loss, for a complete acquaintance with the subject is only to be derived from a perusal of different works, some of them very ill-written. You have often, I dare say, tried to wind a puzzled skein of silk: the work goes on very slowly till you get the right end of the thread, and then it seems to disentangle itself voluntarily and as a matter of course. It is just so with reading history, you poke about at first and run your nose against all manner of contradictions till a little light breaks in and then you begin to see things distinctly. I venture to recommend to you to commence with Lord Hailes' *Annals*, which, in some places a dull and heavy work, is lively and entertaining in others, and has the advantage of the most genuine statement of facts. After this I am afraid you have no resource but John Pinkerton to lead you through the James' reigns. It is a book intolerably ill-written; still, however, it cannot be dispensed with. The reign of James IV. and V. are told with great spirit and naïveté by the ancient Scottish historian Pitscottie, but the earlier reigns are not authentic in his book. If you tire extremely of Pinkerton you may read a more agreeable but less correct account of the same period in Drummond of Hawthornden's history of the four James'. He writes a good, firm, old-fashioned style, and is not very tedious. Having got through the James'

you come to the reign of Mary, the most important in Scotland, and happily written by an author equally distinguished for taste and philosophy, the late Dr. Robertson.

When you have once got the general facts of history, whether English, Scottish, or any other country fixed in your head, you can read memoirs or detached histories of particular areas or incidents with use and pleasure, but a traveller must first be sure of his general landmarks before he has any disposition to stop for the purpose of admiring any particular point of view.

Adieu, my dear young friend. Do not neglect to cultivate your taste for reading just now, for go the world how it will, and I hope it will go most happily with you, you will always find that with a taste for useful knowledge you will have happiness in this, of which scarce any course of events can deprive you. Perhaps I should have used a less strong word, and said comfort and amusement, but alas! my dear, you will know one day that our utmost allotment of happiness in this world means little more. I would have written more about history, but I am interrupted, You must come and tell me how you get on. Give my love to your papa and mamma.—Always your affectionate friend,

WALTER SCOTT.

CASTLE STREET, Sunday [1824].

DEAR SKENE,—Will you come without preface and take your dinner here to-day at half-past five. I wish to consult you about a letter I have from Lord Aberdeen about the Castle Hill antiquities.  
—Yours truly, W. Scott.

I had been recently engaged in exploring some antiquities connected with the Castle of Edin-

burgh and the North Loch, in consequence of the opportunity which was afforded me when I took charge of laying out Princes Street Gardens, and in clearing away the rubbish from the base of the Castle Rock I had made some discoveries of which an account is given in the *Transactions of the Society of Scottish Antiquaries*.

The occasion of the next two letters was a contest which took place for the situation of Rector of the New Academy, for which there were many competitors, and as the Board of Directors, in whose gift the situation was, were divided in political sentiments, party had its influence in this matter, although politics were foreign to the question. Mr. Williams was decidedly the preferable candidate for the situation to which he aspired, but in the eyes of the Whig portion of the Directors the brand of Toryism neutralised all his merits. Nevertheless, his election was accomplished, and the success of his management of the establishment has sufficiently sanctioned the wisdom of the choice. Mr. Heber is the elder brother of Bishop Heber of Calcutta. He is a man of great learning, whose acquaintance I had formed many years before at Oxford, and he is particularly remarkable as the most insatiable of book collectors, being supposed to possess the largest private library in Great Britain, amounting to near 200,000 volumes, but scattered about in houses hired for the purpose in various parts of the country.

ABBOTSFORD, 26th March [1824].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I send you Leslie's letter concerning Mr. Williams.<sup>1</sup> It is directed to Charles. Mr. Surtees is a young man of excellent principles and great promise as a scholar, about twenty-one years of age. Probably a letter from Major Evans of Highmead addressed to me has reached Mr. Russell, to whose care it was addressed, in which case I beg you will take the trouble to open it and communicate it to the Directors if you see proper.

Our opponents will be very busy, but they can but bring the *Crambe bis cocta*, the repetition of the same report which the Wykehamists are necessarily interested in spreading to justify their own treatment of Mr. Williams. I trust to you to keep our friends up to this Whig gossip, for such it is. Aytoun spoke fairly and about the influence of opinions out of doors. For my part, knowing how easily a *cry* is raised, I will be the last to trust the *vox populi*. For the reputation of the school, one month of Williams will set it on its legs, and I think Horner and Cockburn will not draw in others to this extremity, but will make the best of a bad bargain.

I have a letter from one MacCulloch, Mr. Russell's clerk, in which he, pretending to give the shortened list of candidates, has omitted the name of Ridley. Has Ridley retired? or is this gross negligence or something worse, or is it but a slip of the pen in my particular letter? I beg you will inquire into this. I have written my sense of it to send Mr. MacCulloch.

Adieu, sleep with your eyes open, and believe me ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

<sup>1</sup> Vicar of Lampeter, and Charles Scott's tutor.

ABBOTSFORD, Sunday [1824].

MY DEAR SKENE,—The enclosed puts Mr. Williams' character into a striking and, I conclude, a fair point of view, and accounts for the origin of much of the scandal. Major Evans is a man of fortune, residing in his immediate neighbourhood, son-in-law to Lord Robert Seymour. Mr. Aytoun's principle is totally inadmissible. What man of common-sense would give up a charge to come down here upon a trial? In one sense, indeed, he is always on a trial, and may be parted with according to the terms of the prospectus upon very short notice if found unworthy, and Mr. Williams on his own offer, of course, has expressly taken out of the way any delicacy we could have on this point arising from circumstances of a pecuniary nature.

I agree with you we cannot easily get over Barker. I have little doubt private influence has been used to take Ridley out of the field. I wish Barker had been rather an under- than an English master. But I do not see how we can put any suitable person in his place. I have good opinion of Thistlethwaite. It is true he may be rather too good for our purpose, but such a character as his will keep the school high.

Heber sends me enclosed a long tirade addressed to him by Mr. Hare of Trinity College, to be shown to me, repeating the charges against Williams, but Heber intimates at the same time Hare is a Whig, and he himself desires to be considered as saying nothing on the subject. I shall answer these properly.

Your order of battle is excellent, and by adhering to it we shall be secure of victory. I know nothing these gentlemen can have to say except producing the records of N[ew] College, which I

told Cockburn I would admit without seeing them. But they will lump the Rectorship as dogs do pudding, and try to play some back game. I will be with you on Friday.—Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

Our friend Sir Robert is, I understand, much stumbled.

ABBOTSFORD, Thursday [*March 1824*].

MY DEAR SKENE,—Although I am to be with you before five to-morrow, I think it as well to send the enclosed by the Mail coach as they not only contain some very important evidence in Mr. Williams' favour, but an account of Mr. Hare's conduct (Mr. Harris' friend) not much to the credit of his fairness or liberality. I allude to compelling a young man of New College to withdraw a testimony in favour of Mr. Williams as being a *slur* upon the College. It seems a little hard that, not being contented with disposing of their own patronage, these gentlemen Wykehamists should meddle with ours. You will be pleased with Surtees's letters and zeal.—I am always truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

I look upon Hare's letter to Heber as extremely ultroneous and uncalled for.

This refers to the same subject of the Whig struggle to undermine Mr. Williams as an obnoxious Tory, and Sir Walter's sentiments of Whig tactics is amusingly given. In the common intercourse of society his habitual good-humour prevented him from ever giving way to sharp expressions to those opposed to him in sentiments,



but I never knew any person of more quick and acute discernment in detecting the manœuvres of those having an object in view which was not altogether avowed, and in this case he was goaded to state his opinion more sharply than was his usual practice. For although possessing a character of most unflinching candour and straightforwardness, he always avoided giving any unnecessary cause for irritation. Nevertheless, although his great good-humour and unaffected frankness of manner could not but secure esteem, his brilliant talents and his unassailable rectitude and firmness of principle made him more obnoxious to the opposite party in politics than many of far less conciliatory manners, and to such an extent that I could state instances where it amounted to a degree of fiendish vindictiveness that would have delighted in the sacrifice of his life, had any opportunity of fixing a quarrel upon him occurred. He was himself aware of this, and of those to whom it applied, but I never observed that in their society it had the slightest influence on his behaviour towards them. His mind was as free from rancour and guile as it was dauntless. In fact, it was often a matter of great surprise to me to observe in Sir Walter's habitual intercourse in society how supremely his mind seemed to discard those prepossessions and circumstances from the influence of which most people are so incapable of extricating themselves that their intercourse with the individuals who

have given cause to the excitement is perceptibly affected by it.

The open and unembarrassed candour of Sir Walter's manner upon all occasions set every one at his ease, and at once relieved of restraint those who might feel conscious of not deserving it, and whatever the rank or station of those he conversed with, the same kindliness of manner predominated. However much he might have been aware of his mental superiority, he never suffered the consciousness to be apparent. However deficient in condition, age, or mental acquirements the persons he had occasion to converse with, the immeasurable distance that separated them was at once swept away by the frank, cordial, and considerate treatment with which he met them, and where he had reason to be offended the offence only showed itself in tranquil dignity. At the same time we must admit that coarseness and vulgarity in the persons he may at times have had to converse with would be less irksome to him than to most people, from his love of studying and availing himself of character in all its phases.

ABBOTSFORD, 13th March 1824.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I had not the least doubt from the beginning that there was party at the bottom of this opposition. Harris' letter showed the cloven foot in every line. It amounts to no more than that Mr. Williams, a plain man and perhaps conceited of his erudition, was disagreeable to them with whom he early struggled

in the course of preferment, a common circumstance in the life of many scholars. What if he were as rude as Dr. Johnson and Dr. Parr? Might he not be the best for our purpose notwithstanding? A schoolmaster has almost always something pedantic about him, from being long and constantly a man among boys. I have no doubt that Mr. Williams has some of the carelessnesses of an abstracted scholar, and that he may not be quite a pupil of Lord Chesterfield. But I know that his conversation is not only agreeable, but, to literary people, fascinating, and that he has the art of attaching his pupils in a most uncommon degree, which is totally incompatible with the description now drawn. Young Morritt, Villiers Surtees, and my own son—the two last lived with him for years—have the most sincere attachment to him, and describe him as one of the best-humoured men in the world. Is not their testimony, upon whom he exercised the very talents which we desire to judge, much better than that of men whom he was only known to as a student, and that ten years ago? And am not I as pure a channel for conveying their testimony to the Committee as Mr. Harris for reporting the private opinions which he has had the goodness to collect? I never knew the match of the Whigs for talking *up* and whispering *down* their friends, and this is exactly the second edition of Wilson's business, and it must be crushed at once. I have written to Major Evans and Mr. Harford of Blaise Castle, and one or two gentlemen whom we know to be men of education, deserving, and well acquainted with Mr. Williams, but I doubt there is little time for receiving answers, and I think with you that we should decide on the 22nd. Pray let our friends know how the business stands. I never heard *Blackwood's Magazine* received any con-

tributions from Williams, and I do not believe it. I know, however, that Williams extinguished the bonfires at Lampeter which were kindled in honour of Saint Caroline, and perhaps that is as great a crime. For God's sake let us have a full meeting, and let our friends be confidentially apprised of what you tell me. To secure the stronghold of education has been a part of the Whig tactics for this twenty years past. They have not wealth or numbers to found schools, but by a constant system of manœuvres they endeavour to intrigue us out of our natural influence in these matters. But if with our eyes open we allow them to get on our backs and ride us with a cobweb in our mouths, I for one think we will deserve the fate we meet with. I have always expected this, and I am glad the thing is put upon a right footing. I hope Dr. Gabell's<sup>1</sup> letter will arrive in time.—Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Monday [*September 1824*].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I did not answer your letter immediately because I could not exactly ascertain my own motions. If Mr. Canning had come here, it would have been impossible for me to have attended the meeting, but as he is detained from his Scottish tour by the King of France's exit, my time is at my own disposal, and therefore I put it at yours on the 1st October. I am, I own, no particular friend to this species of blow-out, though humbug is so general nowadays that perhaps something of the kind may be necessary. I will, however, be in Castle Street on the night of the 30th and ready to receive your commands, either that night or next morning.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Gabell, D.D. Resigned the Headmastership of Winchester, December 1823.

I hope you expect no forenoon oratory.

‘Ego nunquam potui loquere jejunos,  
Me jejunum vincere potest puer unus,

as sung my namesake, Walter de Mapes.—Yours  
truly, W. SCOTT.

Mr. Canning never made his intended visit, which occasioned me much regret, as I was desirous to have an opportunity of being in company with him. The ‘blow-out’ which Sir Walter alludes to was the first opening of the New Academy in Edinburgh, where he was requested to preside, and notwithstanding his deprecating ‘jeune oratory,’ his speech upon that occasion was in his usual good taste.

CASTLE STREET, EDINBURGH, 18th January 1825.

SIR,—The honour of your company to attend the funeral of my much respected friend Lady Albanley, from the British Hotel, Queen Street, to the place of Interment in the Chapel Royal, on Thursday next the 20th Instant at two o’clock afternoon, is particularly requested by, sir, your most obedient servant, WALTER SCOTT.

Lady Albanley, with her two daughters, the Misses Arden, had come from England to visit Sir Walter Scott, and the lady dying upon that occasion at a distance from the relatives of the family, Sir Walter considered it his duty to take charge of her funeral, and of course to invite the attendance of a sufficient number of

his own friends to join in the due respect shown to the memory of a stranger. She was buried in the chapel at Holyrood House, which was granted at Sir Walter's request.

39 CASTLE STREET, Thursday Evening.

DEAR SIR,—Will you come and dine with me at six o'clock on Tuesday next at the British Hotel.—Yours truly, W. SCOTT.

(*N.B.*—The marriage of Walter Scott, 1st Feb. 1825.)

I insert this note for two reasons, the strong resemblance which the writing of the son, the present Sir Walter, already bore to his father's hand, and also as marking the period of his marriage with Miss Jobson. As he was desirous to have a party comprising an union of his father's friends with his own younger class of acquaintances, the size of the party required its being held in a tavern. Sir Walter was much and devotedly attached to his eldest son, whose conduct on his part was always that of the most affectionate duty. He had inherited much of the amiable qualities of his father's disposition, and as a child even gave him much pleasure by the traits of open-hearted and fearless bearing which he exhibited whenever his disposition was put to trial. For many years of his youth he had no other name in the family than that of Gilnockie, the provincial name of Armstrong, the bold free-

booter, who was most ungenerously put to death by King James v. His father took much pleasure in recording little anecdotes of young Walter's proceedings. Upon one occasion he was invited to a youthful party at the then Lord Advocate Colquhoun's house, where Sir Walter was also present. In the course of the children's amusement young Walter came to say to his father that the young hopeful of the family was not making himself at all agreeable to the party, to which Sir Walter jocularly replied, 'Then knock him down,' upon which young Walter returned to the group of playmates, and desiring his young host to defend himself, gave him a straightforward blow, which levelled him on the floor, to the great consternation of the party. Sir Walter was obliged to take the blame upon himself, but as it did not seem to pacify the anxieties of the Lady Advocate, he very soon retired with his little gamecock.

EDINBURGH, *24th June* [1825].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I was favoured with your kind letter, which I have delayed answering until I should have arranged my motions for the Irish trip. I shall set out on my journey with Lockhart and Anne in the steamboat for Ireland on Tuesday, 13th July, and shall go right for Belfast and Dublin, making it always a principle to attain the furthest point of my journey as soon as possible. I have considerable doubt whether I shall return by the same route, or through England, to show Anne, who has been little from

home, something of the sister-country. If I come *viâ* Belfast or Dublin you may depend upon it a principal object will be to visit Mrs. Skene and you in your Highland retirement, but if England shall carry it, then I must nurse that great pleasure till another season. In the meantime I think it highly probable that Sophia and Lady Scott may look in upon you as they go to Helensburgh for sea-bathing and will be in your neighbourhood.

The bathing is on account of little Johnnie Lockhart to whom it is recommended as strengthening. All public business (of that kind which is unpaid for) is suffering for want of your patriotic care, so I hope you will return early next winter to take care *ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat*.

We have had Maréchal MacDonald here. We had a capital account of Glengarry visiting the interior of a convent in the ancient Highland garb, and the effect of such an apparition on the nuns, who fled in all directions.—My kindest respects attend Mrs. Skene, and I remain, most truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

I had been desirous that Sir Walter and his party should give us the pleasure of a few days at Glenfinart, where my family was then established for the summer. It is one of the most beautiful residences in the Highlands, situated on the shore of Loch Long, the property of the Earl of Dunmore. He was much delighted with his Irish tour, but has throughout his works refrained from availing himself of any knowledge of that portion of the British Empire,



or of touching upon the peculiarities of the Irish character. Feeling that it had been so admirably portrayed in the works of his friend Miss Edgeworth, he, with his usual good feeling, avoided cautiously the slightest appearance of encroachment on a field of illustration which that accomplished lady had so successfully displayed in her numerous publications. In conversation, however, he took great pleasure in detailing the observations this journey afforded him the means of making on the peculiarities and manners of the Irish, the remarkable features of the country, its antiquities and history, and showed that he had not failed to store up abundant materials on these subjects which might have been turned to account had he not considered the field preoccupied.

He was much tickled with the idea of my worthy friend Glengarry visiting a nunnery in the simplicity of his native garb, and more than once I have heard him make it the subject of most amusing description, in which he supposed the consternation of the demure sisterhood at the apparition of a half-naked man in the heart of their sanctuary.

EDINBURGH, 21st January 1826.

SIR,—The honour of your company is requested to attend the Funeral of 'The Chevalier Yelin, from the Royal Hotel, Princes Street, to the Calton Burying Ground, on Tuesday next at two o'clock, which will much oblige, sir, your most obedient servant,

BARON B. D'EICHTHAL.

The Chevalier Yelin and his friend and travelling companion, Baron d'Eichthal, were learned Bavarians. They were very anxious to have an opportunity of seeing Sir Walter Scott, who happened to be in the country at the time of their visit to Edinburgh. They remained on purpose until he came to town, when the Chevalier proposed to see him and to read a paper, descriptive of some scientific discovery he had made, at the first meeting of the Royal Society of which Sir Walter was at the time President. In the interim the Chevalier had caught a feverish cold, notwithstanding which he came in a chair to the meeting of the Society, when, however, Sir Walter was not present, being prevented by indisposition. The Chevalier made an attempt to read his paper, but was soon obliged by illness to desist. He was conveyed home, grew worse, and died in a fortnight, without ever having seen Sir Walter. He had been induced to make the fatal attempt of coming to the Society in consequence of a letter from his wife in answer to his last, regretting his disappointment, saying jocularly that she would not consent to his leaving Scotland without having seen the great Bard. Little did she think that this injunction was to cost her the loss of her husband, with the only consolation that his remains were attended to the grave by the man he had been so anxious to see while in life. The funeral was attended by the President, office-bearers, and many of

the members of the Royal Society, by the Principal and Professors of the University, the Lord Provost, several Judges and persons of distinction willing to show proper respect to the funeral of a foreigner so suddenly arrested by death far from home and friends. The Chevalier bore a singularly striking resemblance to the late distinguished Professor Playfair, and by an odd coincidence their graves were close together under the tower which covers the bones of Hume the historian.

CASTLE STREET, 23rd January [1826].

DEAR SKENE,—If you are disposed for a walk in your gardens any time this morning, I would gladly accompany you for an hour, since keeping the house so long begins rather to hurt me, and you who supported the other day the weight of my body are perhaps best disposed to endure the gloom of my mind.—Yours ever, W. S.

I will call when you please. All hours after twelve are the same to me.

This note was written about a week after the occurrence which deprived Sir Walter of all the well-earned fruits of his literary labours. The family had been at Abbotsford, and it had long been their practice, the day they came to town, to take a family dinner at my house, which had accordingly been complied with upon the present occasion (winter 1825-1826), and I never had seen Sir Walter in better spirits or more agree-

able. The fatal intimation of his bankruptcy, however, awaited him at home, and next morning early I was surprised by a verbal message to come to him as soon as I had got up. Fearful that he had got a fresh attack of the complaint from which he had now for some years been free, or that he had been involved in some quarrel, I went to him by seven o'clock, and found him already seated by candle-light at his writing-table, surrounded by papers which he was examining. Holding out his hand to me as I entered, he said, 'Skene, this is the hand of a beggar; Constable has failed, and I am ruined *du fond au comble*. It's a hard blow, but I must just bear up; the only thing which wrings me is poor Charlotte and the bairns.' However, he did bear the misfortune with uncommon fortitude, forming the resolution thus early of working himself out of his difficulties. This resolution was no sooner formed than acted on, for among the papers which he had assembled around him, he was in search of whatever would admit of publication, and such was his energy that instead of giving way to fruitless repining, betwixt this morning, being Wednesday, and the following Saturday, he had sent to the press half a volume of *The Life of Napoleon*. He calculated that from the smallness of his writing, sixty pages of his usual manuscript go to one 8vo volume of the usual size. This was early in January 1826. I find that I had at the time taken a note of this interview; it is jotted down on a subsequent note

of his requesting me to accompany him in a walk to recover the fatigue he had undergone in his first endeavours to rebuild the foundation on which, should health serve, he meant to rear the fabric of his fortunes. ‘But woe’s me!’ he said, ‘I must mistrust my vigour, for the best of my energies are already expended. You have seen, my dear Skene, the Roman coursers urged to their speed by a loaded spur attached to their backs to whet the rusted metal of their age—aye, it is a leaden spur indeed, and it goads hard.’

I added, ‘But what do you think, Scott, of the bits of flaming paper that are pasted on the flanks of the poor jades: if we could but stick certain small documents on your back, and set fire to them, I think you might submit for a time to the pricking of the spur.’

He laughed and said, ‘Aye! aye! these weary bills; if they were but as the thing that is not. Come, cheer me up with an account of the Roman Carnival.’ And accordingly with my endeavour to do so, he seemed as much interested as if nothing had happened to discompose the usual tenor of his mind, but still our conversation ever and anon dropped back into the same subject, in the course of which he said to me, ‘Do you know I experience a sort of determined pleasure in confronting the very worst aspect of this sudden reverse—in standing, as it were, in the breach that has overthrown my fortunes, and saying, “Here I stand, at least an honest man,”

and God knows if I have enemies. 'This I may at least with truth say, that I have never wittingly given cause of enmity in the whole course of my life, for even the burnings of political hate seemed to find nothing in my nature to feed the flame. I am not conscious of ever having borne a grudge towards any man, and at this moment of my overthrow, so help me God, I wish well and feel kindly to every one. And if I thought that any of my works contained a sentence hurtful to any one's feelings, I would burn it. I think even my novels (for he did not disavow any of them) are free from that blame.'

He had been led to make this protestation, from my having remarked to him the singularly general feeling of good-will and sympathy towards him, which every one was anxious to testify upon the present occasion. The sentiments of resignation and of cheerful acquiescence in the dispensation of the Almighty which he expressed were those of a Christian thankful for the blessings left, and willing, without ostentation, to do his best. It was really beautiful to see the workings of a strong and upright mind under the first lash of adversity, calmly reposing upon the consolation afforded by his own integrity and manful purposes. 'Lately,' he said, 'you saw me under the apprehension of the decay of my mental faculties, and I confess that I was under mortal fear when I found myself writing one word for another, and misspelling every word, but that wore off, and

was perhaps occasioned by the effects of the medicine I had been taking. But have I not reason to be thankful that that misfortune did not assail me? Aye! few have more reason to feel grateful to the Disposer of all events than I have.' For some little time after this event Sir Walter withdrew himself almost altogether from society, and was hard at work preparing for the press, and I was in the habit every day of unkennelling him from his study, when we walked for an hour and a half in Princes Street Gardens, talking with a degree of subdued cheerfulness which seemed to soothe him very much. He talked freely of his plans, and the natural buoyancy of his temperament and sanguine disposition led him soon to feel confident that if health was allowed him he would at length replace his family in their former circumstances.

*26th January 1826.*

MY DEAR SKENE,—A thousand thanks for your most kind proposal. But I am a solitary monster by temper, and must necessarily couch in a den of my own. I should not, I assure you, have made any ceremony in accepting your offer, had it at all been like to suit me. But I must make an arrangement which is to last for years, and perhaps for my lifetime, therefore the sooner I place myself on my footing it will be so much the better.—Always, dear Skene, your obliged and faithful,

W. SCOTT.

This was an answer to a proposal of mine, in

consequence of Sir Walter's intention to sell his town-house and live in the country, coming to town only for the Session and inhabiting any conveniently situated lodging — that for the next summer he should take up his quarters at my house, as my own family would be in the country, leaving a housekeeper to take care of my younger sons till vacation time, which would likewise be the termination of the Session. This would have given him time to look out for apartments.

CASTLE STREET, *2nd March* [1826].

DEAR SKENE,—I will tryst with you on the 9th at six o'clock with pleasure.

I have the enclosed letter of which I much like the tone and spirit. It is from the lad whose paintings I showed you, and does him credit. We must study to get him into the Academy if possible. How is it to be managed?—Yours truly,  
W. SCOTT.

This note refers to the admission of a young artist to the Institution under the patronage of the Board of Trustees, which was obtained for Sir Walter's protégé.

Adverting one day to the subject of the Fine Arts, he said that he had been reflecting on a conversation that we had formerly had on that topic, and that he considered the remarkable genius that seemed to be more profusely displayed in that branch compared with poetic and oratorical talent to be owing to painting having become



more trammelled by the pedantry of criticism, through which imagination and invention were confined within rules of art, than is the case with the other branches. It is common to hear people say that they are not good judges of painting, but this ought not to be so. Every one that has a reasonable share of susceptibility ought to be able to judge of painting as well as of poetry; if either art fails to grasp the feelings, it is imperfect. It may be imitation, but it is neither painting nor poetry. He said that he has seen the poet Burns shed tears on looking at the engraving by Bartolozzi of the soldier lying dead, with his disconsolate widow sitting beside the body, with their child in her arms, taken from a poem of Langhorne's. Probably honest Burns never heard of the poem, yet to his mind the engraving spoke the tale of affliction and touched the right chord in his susceptible mind. 'That is what I call painting, although a critic perhaps would have discovered many deficiencies in it as to art, yet it proved true to its real purpose.'

The energy with which Sir Walter had set himself about turning his resources both present and past to immediate account, with a view to prove to his creditors with as little delay as possible that everything that could depend upon him should be put into operation to retrieve his affairs, made him often reluctant to quit his study, however much he found himself exhausted. However, the employment served to occupy his mind and pre-

vent him from brooding over the misfortune which had befallen him, and this, joined to the natural contentment of his disposition, prevented any approach to despondency. ‘Here is an old effort of mine to compose a melodrama’ (showing me one day a bundle of papers which he had found in his repositories); ‘this trifle would have been long ago destroyed had it not been for our poor old friend Kinnedder who arrested my hand, as he thought it not bad, and for his sake it was kept. I have just read it over, and, do you know, with some satisfaction. Faith, I have known many worse things make their way in the world, so, God willing, it shall e’en see the light if it can do aught to help the hand that fashioned it in the hour of need.’ When I asked the name of this production he said, ‘I suspect I must change the name, having already forestalled it by the *Fortunes of Nigel*. I had called it *The Fortunes of Devorgoil*, but we must not begin to double up in that way, for if you leave anything hanging loose, you may be sure that some malicious devil will tug at it. I think I shall call it *The Doom of Devorgoil*. It will make a volume of itself, and I do not see why it should not come out, *by particular desire*, as a fourth volume to *Woodstock*. They have some sort of connection, and it would not be a difficult matter to bind the connection a little closer. As the market goes, I have no doubt of the Biblioplist pronouncing it worth £1000 or £1500.’ I asked him if he meant it for the stage. ‘No, no,

the stage is a sorry job. That course will not do for these hard days: besides, there is too much machinery in the piece for the stage.' I observed that I was not sure of that, for pageant and machinery was the order of the day, and had Shakespeare been of this date, he might have been left to die a deer-stealer. 'Well then, with all my heart, if they can get the beast to lead or to drive, they may bring it on the stage if they like. It is a sort of goblin tale, and so was *The Castle Spectre* which had its runs.' I asked him if *The Castle Spectre* had yielded Lewis much. 'Little of that; in fact, to its author absolutely nothing, and yet its merits ought to have brought something handsome to poor Mat. But Sheridan, then manager, you know, generally paid in jokes instead of cash, and the joke that poor Mat got, was, after all, not a bad one. Have you heard it? Don't let me tell you a story you know.' As I had not heard it, he proceeded. 'Well, they were disputing about something, and Lewis had clenched his argument by proposing to lay a bet about it. "I shall lay what you ought long ago to have paid me for my *Castle Spectre*." "No, no, Mat," said Sheridan, "I never lay large bets, but come, I will bet a trifle with you, I'll bet what the *Castle Spectre* was worth." Now Constable managed differently: he paid well and promptly, but devil take him, it was all spectral together, moonshine and merriment; he sowed my field with one hand, and as liberally scattered the tares with the other.

He was here yesterday in this very room, and our meeting was a droll one. He came puffing in like a steamboat, holding out the hand as of fellowship, which, however, I somehow managed to elude, and I felt a sort of unwonted reserve, perhaps I may say repugnance, creeping over my countenance, which had never before mingled in our intercourse. But I felt myself an ill-used man, mired up to the throat by a person in whom I had placed undoubting confidence, towards whom I had the most friendly feelings, who lay under some obligations to me, and who could not but have been long aware how he was about to requite them.

‘To look all complacency, approve of the free hand with which I had for some time been laying out my income, partaking with others of the luxuries I thought myself entitled to indulge in, while he was binding about my neck the cords which were to drag me and all that belonged to me in the vortex which speculation had hollowed under his own feet! He tried even to be jocose about it, but that would not do; nature always affords some chink through which the blessed light of truth will show itself, however thick the veil that has been drawn over it. How capitally Rich has caught this in the countenance of Mephistopheles! To me there is nothing so detestable as that sort of fitful grimace which is meant to represent a smile where there is no fountain in the heart to yield it. Our interview was prolonged to a degree of painful irksomeness, and ended

where it began, for it was like the meeting of oil and water; the longer the collision was persevered in, the stronger seemed to be the resistance to anything like union. It was a painful meeting to both, but I dare say less so to me than to my visitor, for at least I had nothing to accuse myself of, but misplaced confidence. So at length up got the man of books, and with a last effort to dispel the clouds that were gathered betwixt us, "Come, come, Sir Walter, matters may come round, and I trust that you and I may yet crack a cheerful bottle of port together at Abbotsford!" I answered him gravely, "Mr. Constable, whether we ever meet again under these conditions must depend upon circumstances which yet remain to be cleared up."

I am not aware that Sir Walter ever even saw Mr. Constable again, and certainly they never met upon terms such as he had anticipated. Mr. Constable's death occurred not very long after. It appeared that the apparent extent of his business had of late years been sustained by pretexts which the mercantile world sometimes deems justifiable. The world was blinded with a degree of success and prosperity which had no foundation in fact, and, whether from a desire to keep up these appearances or from reckless extravagance I know not, Mr. Constable indulged in an expensive establishment, pushing his family forward to a station in life far above that to which they had been born. He was a man of talents, information, and very

plausible address, and had certainly opened quite a new field for the pursuit of literary adventure in Scotland. His prosperity first arose upon the reputation which the *Edinburgh Review*, of which he was the publisher, soon began to acquire, although before that he had been successful with the *Farmers' Magazine*. The *Edinburgh Review* soon acquired a most unprecedented sale, but the principles it advocated, for the diffusion of which it had been chiefly undertaken, drew down upon it a formidable rival in the *Quarterly Review* and a most active and powerful auxiliary in *Blackwood's Magazine*. From these attacks the *Edinburgh Review* soon sustained a serious diminution in the sales, and to conceal this symptom of discomfiture to the popularity of Whig principles, it appears that Constable kept up the amount of the edition, and even somewhat increased it, to give an opportunity of boasting that testimony to its prevalence, while at the same time he was secreting a considerable portion of the edition to his great loss, giving out that they were sold, when at his death the back numbers were found stored up in great quantity in cellars where they had been kept concealed, somewhat upon the principle of the Dutch who were in the practice on the arrival of their East Indian vessels of throwing a certain proportion of the bales of coffee into the Zuyder Zee. Along with the Reviews was found also a great part of the edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which Mr. Constable had also undertaken.

and which had been conceived to have been a most profitable undertaking. There was also much property of the same kind in other publications, so that this species of humbug seemed to have been the system of his trade, and it accounted in a great measure for the catastrophe which had finally overtaken it.

It had become necessary for Sir Walter to break up his establishment both in town and in the country, to dismiss all his servants, and reduce his household to the smallest possible scale, and in the progress of these plans of retrenchment instances occurred of disinterested attachment in his servants that was very gratifying to him. His butler Macgleish, when told of the necessity of his finding another master, and offered his wages to the next term, burst into tears, and not only refused positively to accept of the wages due, but begged earnestly that he might be allowed to remain without wages, saying that he had saved a small sum already, which would supply his wants, and that Sir Walter having been so kind a master to him in prosperity, it would break his heart to forsake him in his adversity, when he must still have somebody to die with him. An effort was accordingly made to keep Macgleish. Sir Walter's house in North Castle Street, which he had now inhabited for a good many years, was sold, and also the whole of the furniture, upon which occasion he sent me Sir Henry Raeburn's beautiful full-length portrait of him, saying that he did not

hesitate to claim my protection for his picture, which was threatened to be paraded under the hammer of the auctioneer, and he felt that his interposition to turn aside that buffet might admit of being justified. As a piece of successful art many might fancy the acquisition, but for the sake of the original he knew no refuge where it was likely to find a truer welcome. The picture accordingly remained for many years in my possession, but when his health had begun to break, and the plan of his going abroad was proposed, I thought it would be proper to return the picture, and for this purpose I had got a most successful copy made of it, an absolute facsimile, for when the two were placed side by side it was almost impossible to determine which was the original and which was the copy. Upon that occasion he wrote to me a very affecting letter, which will be found in the proper place in point of date. When the establishment in Edinburgh was broken up, the family retired to Abbotsford to live in the most private manner, while Sir Walter accommodated himself in lodgings in town. Before Sir Walter's misfortune Lady Scott's health had begun to decline, which this circumstance, preying on her spirits, very much aggravated, and in the May of 1826 she sank under it, which the accompanying letter announced. She was buried in the family vault at Dryburgh Abbey, and the friends assembled upon that occasion were very much surprised, when the procession reached the ground, to see Sir



Walter step from his own carriage, which as usual had followed the hearse with the blinds drawn up. He assisted in bearing the coffin to the grave, stood beside it in silence till the ceremony was completed, then, solemnly bowing to the company assembled, again entered his carriage without uttering a word and drove home.

ABBOTSFORD, Friday, 20th May 1826.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I know that the tried friendship of Mrs. Skene and yourself will make you anxious about us in our present calamitous circumstances. Anne, who has discharged a most arduous duty very firmly, is now unwell from watching, over-exertion and distress of mind, but it is nothing serious, and she is better the last two days. I expect Lockhart and Charles here on Sunday, which will be some comfort. I propose to be here till I see Anne fairly well. She has her cousin Anne Scott with her, which is a great comfort.—I am, dear Skene, truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Pray mention this to Colin Mackenzie.

The next letter is a reply to one of mine written on this sad occasion. The Rev. Edward Ramsay had attended in his official capacity.

ABBOTSFORD, 23rd May [1826].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I take the advantage of Mr. Ramsay's return to Edinburgh to answer your kind letter. It would have done no good to have brought you here when I could not have enjoyed your company, and there were enough of

friends here to insure everything being properly adjusted. Anne, contrary to a natural quickness of temper, is quite quiet and resigned in her distress, but has been visited by many fainting fits, the effect I am told of weakness, over-exertion, and distress of mind. Her brothers are both here, Walter having arrived from Ireland yesterday in time to assist at the *munus inane*. Their presence will do her much good, but I cannot think of leaving her till Monday next, nor indeed could I do my brethren much good coming to town, having still that stunned and giddy feeling, which great calamities temporarily produce. It will soon give way to my usual state of mind, and my friends will not find me much different from what I have usually been. Mr. Ramsay, who I find is a friend of yours, appears an excellent young man.—My kind love to Mrs. Skene, and am always yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

WALKER STREET, Friday, 18th May 1827.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I am just returned from Court, dripping like the water kelpy when he finished the Laird of Murphie's Bridge, and am like that ill-used drudge disposed to sing

‘Sair back and sair bones.’

In finale, I have the rheumatism in head and shoulders, and am obliged to deprive myself of the pleasure of waiting upon you to-day to dinner to my great mortification.—Always yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Sir Walter began to suffer severely from rheumatism, which settled in his knee, adding greatly to his lameness; in fact, shortly after this

time the power of his unsound leg failed him very much.

Wednesday [1827].

DEAR JAMES,—I send you an old book containing a satire upon Frendraught<sup>1</sup> in hopes that you may find something germane to the matter of your inquiries.

I will meet you at the R. Socy. rooms, the sitting of the Court permitting.—Yours truly,

W. SCOTT.

The inquiries to which Sir Walter alludes to my being then engaged in was the edition of Spalding's *History of the Troubles*, published for the Bannatyne Club. I had intended to illustrate that work with the history of such remarkable occurrences as were referred to in the context, of which the burning of Frendraught was one, but found that it would have rendered the work too voluminous, besides being a departure from the regulations of the Club.

[May 1827.]

MY DEAR SKENE,—I heartily grieve for my young friend's disappointment. He is, it seems, too old for the Engineers, which I should hardly have thought. Perhaps something else might be shaped out under the same patronage, as you have younger boys.—Yours truly,

W. S.

<sup>1</sup> Frendraught Tower was burned by an incendiary in October 1630. The Viscount Melgum, Lord Rothemay, and four servants perished in the fire. Confessions were wrung by torture from several of the servants, but it was generally believed that, to avenge herself on her guests, Viscountess Frendraught herself had set fire to her castle. —*Criminal Registers of Scotland*, 1584-1655, collected by Lord Fountainhall.

Sir Walter had been kind enough to apply to the Duke of Wellington for one of my sons who was at that time desirous to enter into the service of the Engineer Corps. The Duke wrote a very kind letter in answer, regretting that my son had passed the age to which admission had been confined, but offering to appoint a younger son, if I happened to have one so disposed.

3 WALKER STREET, Wednesday [*May 1827*].

MY DEAR SKENE,—The bearer is Mr. Stewart Watson, painter of some pieces now in the Exhibition to which I have not been, and therefore cannot judge of their merit. He is naturally ambitious in case he shall be thought deserving to be admitted as one of the Associate Artists, and I beg leave to say that he is a distant relation of my own, and is a very respectable young man. On the point of vertu I say not a word, because my word would not be worth a penny.—Ever yours truly,  
W. SCOTT.

I admitted the young man according to Sir Walter's request, having the power to do so as Secretary of the Royal Institution.

Saturday Morning [*May 1827*].

MY DEAR SKENE,—The Oil Gas business comes on to-day in Exchequer. so I cannot go to the levée or of course to the dinner. W. S.

Sir Walter was at this time Chairman of the Directors of the recently established Oil Gas

Company in Edinburgh, a concern which, after promising great success, ultimately turned out a failure. I was also one of the Directors, and we each lost a few hundred pounds by the speculation, after having had a great deal of trouble in the management, and having received the usual reward of voluntary labourers for the public good—much abuse.<sup>1</sup>

MY DEAR SKENE,—I give you joy of what you will find on the other side. We have turned the corner after all.—Yours truly, W. SCOTT.

LONDON, 21 FLUDYER STREET,  
29th May 1827.

DEAR SIR,—I have much pleasure in being enabled to state to you that the Report of the Barons has been favourable for us, and that the Treasury have abandoned their opposition to us in consequence. We therefore proceed with the Report to-morrow, and I hope to get through the House of Commons forthwith.—I am, dear Sir, very respectfully yours, J. MACKENZIE.

Tuesday Morning [*June* 1827].

MY DEAR SKENE,—Anne and I will wait on Mrs. Skene and you with great pleasure on Thursday. I am just come from Fife, where I have seen many family pictures. Of their value I say nothing, but you should examine Wemys Castle, Ely House, Balcaskie, and other Fifean mansions.—Yours truly, W. S.

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Oil Gas have determined to apply once more to Parliament: they are to pay Sir Walter’s expenses up to London to manage it for them.’—Letter from W. F. Skene to James Skene.

From the numerous collections of drawings which I possessed of the most ancient mansions of Scotland, and the observations I had made on the peculiarities in the style of the baronial and castellated residences, Sir Walter had often urged me to arrange my notes on that subject, and as he had also some ideas, he thought we might throw off something of general interest in that matter. The accompanying note had reference to that purpose, which I am sorry to say I did not put in practice till too late to secure that aid which might have given value to the undertaking. But immediately after Sir Walter's death I did follow up his proposal, and have arranged my notes into a volume on the 'Domestic Architecture of Scotland,' in manuscript, in which state it is likely to to remain.<sup>1</sup>

ABBOTSFORD, 26th December [1828].

DEAR SKENE,—We will be delighted to see you, as I learn from Anne your kind intention to look in on us during the vacation. I hope Mrs. Skene will accompany you, as we can give you a comfortable bedroom. We are very sorry that we cannot on this occasion beg for the company of our young friends, George and Miss Eliza, whom we hope to see in spring. If you can easily bring with you the striking description of the subterranean vaults at Baden (I think supposed to be the place of meeting of the secret tribunal) with your plan and drawings, they will do me yeoman's service in something I am now about. You will meet John Morritt and his niece, Sir

<sup>1</sup> The MS. is now among the Skene papers.

James Stewart, and Lockhart, who will give us all the news. Any day after Monday will suit us excellently well, or Monday itself—only we have a number of people whom you would not care about—will see you equally welcome.

This is a truly horrid business about Burke and his associates. I have been poring at the account in the papers till I am well-nigh blind, therefore conclude in haste,<sup>1</sup>—Always affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

At this time Sir Walter was engaged in the composition of the novel of *Anne of Geierstein*, for which purpose he wished to see a paper I had contributed some time before to the *Memoirs of the Society of Antiquaries* on the subject of the Secret Tribunals of Germany, and upon which accordingly he grounded the scene in the novel. Upon his describing to me the scheme which he had formed for that work, I suggested to him that he might with advantage connect the history of René, King of Provence, which would lead to many interesting topographical details, which my residence in that country would enable me to supply, besides giving him the opportunity of illustrating

<sup>1</sup> It was proved at the trial that Burke, Hare, and other Irish had enticed a number of vagrants and children to a cellar in the West Port and had there murdered them in order to sell their bodies to the dissecting rooms. Burke was hanged on 28th January 1829: Hare escaped the gallows by turning approver. Recognised by some navvies after the trial he was thrown into a lime pit, which destroyed his sight. He is said to have lived for forty years as a blind beggar in the London streets. The crime gave a new word to the English language—a word hurled at Sir Walter Scott himself by the mob at Jedburgh during the Reform meeting in 1831.

so eccentric a character as 'le bon Roi René' full of traits which were admirably suited to Sir Walter's graphic style of illustration, and that he could beside introduce the amusing ceremonies of the Fête Dieu with great advantage, as I had fortunately seen its revival the first time it was celebrated after the interruption of the Revolution. He liked the idea much, and accordingly a journal which I had written during my residence in Provence, with a volume of accompanying drawings and Papon's *History of Provence*, were forthwith sent for, and in the course of a few days I received a most amusing note from him, announcing the suppression of the already printed volume of *Anne of Geierstein* and the readjustment of the tale. He proposed to retain Papon's *History* and my manuscript volumes till the novel was finished, as he meant to locate his *dramatis personæ* in many of the positions I had described, even in the secret chambers of the Geheim Gericht, so that on perusal I should find the new Anne an old acquaintance. I never met with a stronger instance of the uncommon versatility of Sir Walter's genius than he displayed in the facility with which he took up the spirit of a narrative altogether new to him and the characteristics of a country which he had never seen. He had never been either in Switzerland or those parts of ancient Burgundy where the remainder of the scenery of that work is placed, but he availed himself of the drawings which my collec-



tions afforded him, and the knowledge of the country that I was able to give him.

The allusion at the close of this letter is to the horrible murders of which Burke and his associates had just been convicted. There was nothing in which he seemed really to take more interest than the details of criminal trials, and I have often heard him say that imagination, however brilliant, could never equal the interest and extraordinary development of human character, as well as the striking combination of incident which many of these trials disclosed; that in writing romance there was no source whence so much could be derived as from the journals of a criminal court; that the singular coincidences which led to detection, the infatuated proceedings of the criminal, the mental workings of the witnesses, and every stage of the proceedings afforded an invaluable school as well as an inexhaustible fund of materials to work upon. Accordingly Sir Walter has largely availed himself of this fund in his various writings.

I recollect his narrating to me in 1826 an incident of a Scottish schoolmaster which occurred during the period when the minds of the common and middle ranks of the country were much set agog by the delusions practised on them by the demagogues of 1794, calling themselves 'Friends of the People.' With a view to explode the fallacy of these attempts, the schoolmaster had written a pamphlet addressed to his countrymen,

full of good sense and sound principle, which he showed to Mr. Somerville, a clergyman of Jedburgh, who was so much pleased with the unaffected simplicity of the style as strongly to urge its publication. This the modest schoolmaster declined, both on the ground of the humble station he held and his deficiency of means to bear any expense which might attend its being printed, but as Mr. Somerville was allowed to make any use he chose of the manuscript, he undertook the expense and made the address public under the schoolmaster's name. It soon rose in fame, and even attracted the notice of Government, and the late Lord Melville wrote to the author desiring to be informed in what way he could reward him, for if there was any preferment in the gift of the Government which he desired, he would use his influence to obtain it for him. The schoolmaster answered this flattering letter by saying that he felt happy in his Lordship's approbation, but that, being already possessed of a salary of £50 a year as a teacher, and being without children, he had in that respect nothing further to desire. If, however, he might take the liberty to offer a suggestion, any preferment bestowed upon the Revd. Mr. Somerville, who had a family and but a small stipend, would be very gratifying to himself. The consequence was the immediate promotion of Mr. Somerville both in fortune and dignity. He became Dr. Somerville, subsequently known

to the public as the author of *The Reign of Queen Anne*.

June 1829.

DEAR JAMES,—I wish you had postponed your visit to Dumfries till we knew where Train was and where the objects that are to be sought for lie. Sir Adam is also at present in town. I will call as I come from the Parliament House and take the chance of seeing you.

I send a manuscript for the Antiquarian Society, presented by Colonel Franklin of the East India Company's service, and enclose his letter.—I am, very truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Many of the real localities of the Waverley Novels were connected with my collection of drawings, of which a part had been taken at his suggestion, many during the various excursions we had made together, and not a few in countries where Sir Walter never had been, though he had taken the descriptions from the drawings I possessed. The idea occurred to him that a collection of these 'Localities' might be found interesting, and he therefore recommended me to undertake it. It was so arranged as to come out simultaneously with each volume of the new series of the novels, in which he gives an introductory account of each, and as he had previously communicated with me as to the identity of the subjects to be etched, their appearance obtained the advantage of perfect authenticity, and that

before any person could be aware of the subjects which were applicable. For completing the necessary set of drawings I had occasion to make a few provincial trips, of which that alluded to in the accompanying note was one. Mr. Train, whose assistance he wished me to obtain, was a person who had furnished Sir Walter with various traditions of which he availed himself in his novels. Twenty numbers of this work, which completed a volume comprehending the Localities of above one-half of the series of novels, were accordingly published, but as I was my own engraver as well as draughtsman, the minuteness of the work necessary to bring the scale of the engravings to the size of the novels, made it too severe a strain upon the eyes, so that it was discontinued at the close of the first volume,<sup>1</sup> and the second volume remains unpublished in a manuscript, in which all the original drawings are inserted.

14th July 1829.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I write in great haste to acknowledge your kind letter, and thank you for your opinion about the coins. I think your idea of putting the Crookston dollar, if to be had, in the bottom of the large one is excellent, and if Wrighton can show the reverse as well as obverse of the coin in the small cups, keeping them whiskey-tight at the same time, it will be admirable. I should have thought it odd indeed if

<sup>1</sup> *A Series of Sketches of the Existing Localities alluded to in the Waverley Novels, Etched from Original Drawings by James Skene. Published by Cadell & Co., Edinburgh, 1829.*

Gibbie<sup>1</sup> had unloosed his sporran for any other purpose than clinking in the cash.

We are all here well, that is Johnnie is not worse than Mrs. Skene and you saw him. I send the Highland Dictionary for your own acceptance and George's use. Anne sends a letter for Mrs. Skene, and all send love and compliments to her and your family. I trust the etchings get on and are like to succeed.—Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

This refers to the appropriate mounting of a set of Highland quaichs, or cups, made of the wood of various remarkable trees and other relics. Sir Walter took much pleasure in displaying them on his table and in relating the merits and historical anecdotes connected with them. As he had requested me to take charge of their embellishment, I had obtained from the collections of the Antiquarian Society several very interesting and beautiful Scottish coins, duplicates of their series, which the Society very liberally presented to Sir Walter for the use intended to be made of them. But of the fine gold piece of King James v., called the Bonnet piece, they had no duplicate, and I applied to Mr. Gilbert Innes of Stow, a great collector recently deceased, knowing that he possessed several specimens, but failed in prevailing upon him to bestow one upon Sir Walter.

As my son was studying the Gaelic language for the purpose of deciphering the ancient manu-

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Innes of Stow.

scripts in that language which are preserved, Sir Walter presented me with a copy of the magnificent Gaelic Dictionary recently published, of which a copy had been sent to him by the publishers.

ABBOTSFORD, 15th July 1829.

MY DEAR SKENE,—Captain Carmichael, who is just returned from India, has just placed at my disposal what I consider as a curiosity. It is a Scottish piece of artillery, a four-pounder, cast by James Menteith at Edinburgh, 1642, and by an extraordinary chance taken at Bhurtpore in the last war. Mr. Carmichael's goodness having consulted me as to the disposal of this curious piece of artillery, I have recommended its being deposited in the Antiquarian Museum, to which Captain Carmichael has willingly agreed. I beg therefore to introduce him to you, as he seems a fine manly soldier, and has behaved most [liberally] to the Society in this transaction.—Yours very affectionately, WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, 31st July [1829].

MY DEAR SKENE,—I enclose you Basil Hall's letter, which is very interesting to me, but I would rather decline fixing the attention of the public further on my old friend George Constable. You know the modern rage for publication, and it might serve some newsman's purpose by putting on publishing something about my old friend, who was an humourist, which may be displeasing to his friends and surviving relations.

I did not think on Craignethan in writing about Tillietudlem, and I believe it differs in several respects from my *château en Espagne*. It is not on the Clyde in particular, and if I recollect, the

view is limited and wooded, but there can be no objection to adopting it as that which public taste has adopted as coming nearest to the ideal of the place.

Of the places in the *Black Dwarf*, Mucklestone Moor, Elshie, Earnscliff, are all and each *vox et præterea nihil*. Westburnflat is or was a real spot. Now there is no subject for the pencil. The vestiges of a town at the junction of two wild brooks with a rude hillside are all that are subjects for the pencil, and they are very poor ones. Earnscliff and Gamescleugh are also visions.

I hope your work is afloat and sailing bobbishly. I have not heard of or seen it.

*Rob Roy* has some good and real subjects, as the peep at Lochard, the beautiful fall at Lediart near the head of the lake. Let me know all you desire to be informed about without fear of bothering. Kindest compliments to Mrs. Skene and the young folk.—Always yours entirely,

WALTER SCOTT.

Woe's me for the oil gas!

*Sic transit gloria mundi.*

But my eyes are too sleepy to cry.

The letter which Sir Walter here alludes to from Captain Basil Hall, was one which he had addressed to me, enclosing an account from a friend of the House of Wallace Craigie, now pulled down, but which had been the residence of Mr. Constable, the original of the Laird of Monkbarns, the Oldbuck of the *Antiquary*; also some anecdotes of that old friend of Sir Walter's. He proposed that as he could not assign any very

distinct localities that he had had in view in respect to topography when he wrote the *Antiquary*, he would prefer the omission of the *Antiquary* in the series of localities which I was then publishing, and this was accordingly attended to. As to Craignethan, he authorises its admission into the series. The rest of the letter explains itself.

It was about this time that Sir Walter met with a domestic calamity which affected him very much, in the sudden and unexpected death of a faithful servant,<sup>1</sup> and in a manner a companion. Upon his assiduity and assistance he had been long dependent, and he was amused by his eccentricities. Tom Purdie identified himself with all his master's pursuits and concerns. He had in early life been a shepherd, and came into Sir Walter's service upon his first taking up his abode at Ashestiel, of which he became at last the farm manager, and upon the family removing to Abbotsford, he continued to discharge that function, to which were added those of gamekeeper, forester, librarian, and henchman to his master in all his rambles about the property. He used to talk of Sir Walter's publications as '*our* books,' and said that the reading of them was the greatest comfort to him, for whenever he was off his sleep, which sometimes happened to him, he had only to take one of the novels, and before he had read two pages it was sure to set him asleep. Tom,

<sup>1</sup> Tom Purdie died on the 29th October 1829.



with the usual shrewdness common to his countrymen in that class of life, joined a quaintness and drollery in his notions and mode of expressing himself that were very amusing. He was familiar, but at the same time perfectly respectful, although he was sometimes tempted to deal sharp cuts, particularly at Sir Adam Ferguson, whom he seemed to take a pleasure in assailing. When Sir Walter obtained the honour of knighthood for Sir Adam upon the plea of his being the custodian of the Regalia of Scotland, Tom was very indignant, 'because,' he said, 'it will take some of the shine out of us,' meaning Sir Walter. Tom was very fond of salmon-fishing, which from an accordance of taste contributed much to elevate my merits in his eyes, and I believe I was his greatest favourite among all Sir Walter's friends, which he used occasionally to testify by imparting to me in confidence some secret about fishing, which he concluded that no one knew but himself. He was remarkably fastidious in his care of the library, and it was exceedingly amusing to see a clodhopper (for he was always in the garb of a ploughman) moving about in the splendid apartment which had been fitted up for the library, scrutinising the state of the books, putting any derangement to rights, and remonstrating when he observed anything that indicated carelessness.

The library at Abbotsford was entirely collected by Sir Walter himself, and, in the progress of his

literary career, considerably augmented by presents of books from all quarters. The collection in Scottish history especially was very valuable, as containing not only standard books on the subject, but also a complete collection of pamphlets, tracts, and other rare pieces, as well as manuscripts connected with the subject. It was also very rich in Scandinavian and northern literature, in rare and curious works in German, French, and Spanish, in poetry and plays, and in a curious collection in English history, antiquities, and topography, besides the works of general literature.

Sir Walter had adopted the emblem of the Portcullis as the library badge which was stamped upon his books, with the motto *Clausus tutus ero*, which, it will be observed, if the letters are rearranged, forms 'Walter Scott.'

A clever bust of poor Tom was executed by one of the masons employed in building Abbotsford. Although a little of a caricature, it possessed a strong resemblance. Sir Walter had it placed over the south access to the Kitchen Court, where it still remains. Tom was buried at Melrose Abbey, and a handsome stone, with an inscription, was placed by Sir Walter over his grave. He attended his funeral as chief mourner, and was indeed a sincere mourner, for the upright character and strong attachment of the poor fellow was well calculated to secure the affection of his master.

I had long been in the habit of passing Christmas with Sir Walter in the country. He had great pleasure in assembling what he called a fireside party, where he was always disposed to indulge in the free and unrestrained outpouring of his cheerful and convivial disposition. Upon one of these occasions, the comedian Mathews and his son were at Abbotsford, and most entertaining they were, giving us a full display of all their varied powers in scenic representations, narrations, songs, ventriloquism, and frolic of every description, and drawing upon a store of most amusing anecdotes connected with the professional adventures of the elder, and the travels of the son, who seemed as much of a genius as his father. He has never appeared on the stage, although abundantly fit to distinguish himself in that department, but has taken to the profession of architecture. Notwithstanding that the snow lay pretty deep on the ground, Sir Walter, old Mathews and myself set out with the deer-hounds and terriers to have a wide range through the woods and high grounds, and a most amusing excursion it was, from the difficulties which beset Mathews, who was unused to that sort of scrambling, and was somewhat lame from an accident he had met with in being thrown from a gig. The good-humoured manner with which each of my two lame companions strove to get over the bad passes, their jokes as they alternately shouted for my assistance to help them

through, and the liveliness of their conversation, as each tried to cap the story of the other by some incident equally if not more entertaining, were most amusing; and it may be well supposed that the healthful exercise of a walk of this description disposed every one to enjoy the festivity which was to close the day.

But these exertions on the part of Sir Walter were soon to terminate. Infirmary, once begun, made rapid encroachments upon that defective portion of his frame which caused his lameness, against which his strength and the general vigour of his constitution had hitherto prevailed. He began to lose confidence in the support of his lame leg, and for a short time used a pony, but finding inconvenience in that mode of exercise also, he became at last reduced to an open carriage, and confined his excursions to where it could have access. The roads, hills, and glens, his former favourite haunts, had now to give place to more practicable circuits. From time to time he had great delight in performing a sort of pilgrimage to some more distant scene, which circumstances had rendered interesting to him. Of these, the farm of Sandy Knowe, with the old tower of Smailholm, the home of his infant years, was a favourite object of pilgrimage. The last time he undertook this excursion—and he seemed to foresee that it would prove to be the last—there was only his daughter, his niece, Mrs. Skene, and myself. He became very thoughtful when

we reached the wild, craggy glen in which the old tower stands. He wandered over every part, stopping at times to gaze in silence at particular spots, the little grassy corners, which had been the playground of his infancy, and made me take drawings of the scene from different points, for the picturesque and wild aspect of the scene was highly deserving of being portrayed. We lingered there the whole forenoon, and, having lunched on the grass, quitted it with regret. It afforded the subject of many early recollections, which Sir Walter seemed to take great pleasure in narrating, adding, 'and here I am, an old, decrepit man, come to take my leave of Smailholm.'

We were surprised soon afterwards at seeing in the newspaper an account of this little excursion, which had found its way there through the vigilance of a schoolmaster who overlooked our proceedings.

ABBOTSFORD, Easter Monday, 1830.

MY DEAR SKENE,—The London people wrote me a long time ago for countenance and assistance to their plan, which I declined, alleging truly that I was pledged to you on the subject. They wrote again, about a month ago, that they did not consider their publication as interfering with yours, wished to send me a copy, etc., which letter I left unanswered, thinking it sufficiently replied to by my first. I cannot presume to give advice about the advertising, and Cadell is best counsellor in that case. You might surely hint that you were the real Simon Pure, and had your scratchings, which are from the Cock Lane ghost

himself. But I am quite unacquainted with the best way of saying this. A positive controversy with people of their description is always a scrape. I am glad you have taken Fast Castle. If I could get to Lord Napier's he would let me have some curious matter for illustration, a contract between the famous Napier of Merchiston (Logarithm) and John Logan of Fast Castle about raising the Devil.

I do not believe these English folks can tell what castles I meant, since I do not know them myself.

There has been a smart thunderstorm. I was in the wood the whole time, and though I am no great starter, one clap was so close above me that I attempted a superb *entrechat* in the height of my astonishment. It struck, as I afterwards learned, a house in Melrose.

Brace from Badenogh is in high favour. He was lost for a day, but very judiciously found himself strayed. He went to the best house in his neighbourhood, which was Haining, where he was most hospitably received. Thank Heaven he did not find out the deer park.

Anne acquaints me that you are looking this way with the lady and young folks. I wish you would include the 19th current in your visit, as the Strange family talk of coming that day. Suppose, to *éviter* the encounter of posthorses, you come next Saturday 17th, or any other day more convenient in the end of this week, Monday next being the 19th.

Always yours, with best regards to Mrs. Skene and family,

WALTER SCOTT.

This has been delayed by foolish accident.

This refers to the same subject—the etchings I

was engaged in publishing. The London work on the same subject which he alludes to, I afterwards gave my assistance to, and a considerable proportion of the engravings are from drawings of mine.

Brace was a very magnificent deer-hound, a great favourite with Sir Walter.

FROM SIR WALTER SCOTT TO SIR ALEXANDER  
YOUNG OF HARBURN, BART.<sup>1</sup>

EDINBURGH, 20th May 1830.

I received your kind letter and that of Mr. —, <sup>2</sup> which last I return. I am sorry to see him express so much feeling of pain on account of our friend Capt. Hall's book, and I think some part of it will disappear on a second perusal after an interval. I am far from saying that Mr. — has not reason for some remarks, and probably for others that I am no judge of. But some allowance must be always made for the delicate and difficult task of making a comparison between two nations who have so many things in common that they are apt to dispute with more keenness the comparative few on which they differ, as religious sects are found to be most irreconcilably opposed to each other exactly in proportion to the trifling nature of the questions of difference. The Americans are so like the British as the British to the American, that they have not much patience with each other for not being in all respects the same with each other. Captain Hall, I can assure Mr. —, went out with the most favourable views of America and the same desire

<sup>1</sup> This is included in the Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Name not given.

to paint things *couleur de rose* as in his account of South America. This I know to be the case, having spoken to him on the subject. Perhaps a preconceived wish to find everything perfect is not the state of mind to avoid disappointment, for when our expectations are highly raised the circumstances are apt to disappoint us. Basil Hall I should call a good Whig, but for that very reason I can easily conceive that I, a staunch Tory as ever was hanged for whistling 'You're welcome, Charlie Stewart,' might form a much more agreeable society, because I would, or at least ought to, avoid subjects of controversy, and I am sure I would find gentlemen who would find more agreeable topics, which would offend neither. But a person who did not feel the same check or *retenue* in his conversation would, I think, be more apt than a more direct opponent to get on painful subjects. Captain Hall has also in an uncommon degree the habit of pursuing inquiries, time and place not always considered, and like his poor father pushes on direct to the point on which he desires to be informed. He is, however, a discriminating man, and powerful writer; and when such take into consideration the manners of another country, there may be always expected a certain advantage to the country criticised. For example, there was of old a certain philosopher, called Dr. Johnson, who came down to a wild northern region called Scotland, where he was regaled with the best they had to give, in hopes he would give a flaming picture of the beauties of the land; but the false loon, being high gravel blind, as far as the beauties of landscape were concerned, saw no beauties at all, but discerned an amazing lack of trees and sundry tokens of poverty, sluttishness, and laziness, which he noted and censured very roundly and con-



tumeliously. Now when this appeared, our dear countrymen fell to crying shame and falsehood and other bad words, and could they have got the doctor under their Andrew Ferraras, he was in danger of being made fit for the contents of a haggis. But when the first heat was over the canny Scots discerned that the best mode of vengeance was that which should wipe away the sense of obloquy ; and thus it is to the doctor's sarcasm that the Scots owe the existence of the extensive woodlands of Alexander Young and Walter Scott, etc., etc., to say nothing of Sir Henry Stewart who teaches the full-grown *hamadryades* to dance like figurantes in a *ballet*. In fact, on all such occasions there is a disposition to defend the point attacked though it be in some degree indefensible. The report of the Traveller is something like Abhorson's mystery ; if it be too little, the person who confers it thinks it large enough ; and if it be too liberal, the party receiving it accounts it little enough. It requires time and patient perusal to discover which way the balance should be made to incline ; indeed, though I heartily deprecate the ripping up of the defects or imperfections of any country in an illiberal or insulting manner, I am rather a friend to description of contested points between them with temper and arguments. If, on finding arguments against the peculiar customs or laws of our country urged with decency and power of reason, we still find that the attack is erroneous, we gain no important advantage by the advantage of proving *that* right by reason, which we had previously believed to be so on authority. It is probable. I should hope, that both nations having so close points of resemblance in general matters may derive benefit from calmly collating their points of difference, and perhaps they may both

derive advantage from such an amicable discussion. Your excellent friend would, I am sure, desire such an amicable discussion, if likely to be followed with friendly results and an improvement of the principles of public measures on both sides; and Capt. Hall, I am positive, did not write the censure which he has taken the liberty to use in some points of his publication from any illiberal or insolent spirit of taunting our American countrymen and brothers. He cut down his work from an immense mass of material, and it may well be that he has dwelt too much upon what he considers as imperfections in the American Constitution; but having heard him speak very freely on the subject, I think I can attest that he had no intention to bring bad humour or national prejudices into the discussion on such a subject, though in some places he may inadvertently have fallen into error, and at others expressed himself with too much severity or too much confidence in cursory observation.

As your well-tempered and excellent correspondent gives more weight to my opinion than I could venture to claim, I can have no objection to your transmitting to him any part of this letter which you may think apposite to the purpose, only concluding that I see discussion between us and the Americans as threatening infinite disadvantage to both nations and offering no adequate advantage to either.

SELKIRK, 30th September [1830].

MY DEAR SKENE,—Nothing could give me more sincere pleasure than your letter. Poor Sir William Arbuthnot's place was so exactly cut out for you that I wonder it did not occur to me at the time it opened. Luckily others were sharper sighted. You have such pretensions from having

been the willing and gratuitous servant of the public, that I am sure you have deserved and will meet with preference. I cannot think that any one can touch you; all the same, let me know if I can do anything to decide the dubious. I trust Rae will not be wanting at this crisis, where his own interest can be in no way impinged upon. I am happy on my own account as well as yours, having always some fears that if you were not attached to Auld Reekie by some such cable you might one day cut and run to distant parts.

I think Cadell should have enlarged the impression. I trust he will now do so. The expense can be but a trifle. The whole affair seems to go on swimmingly.

Sophia is still ill of the rheumatism, and though there is no danger, it is like to be a very tedious business. Lockhart must set out to London in two days; he thinks of taking steam from Edinburgh, and leaves us Sunday for that purpose. Anne talks of going on to see Johnnie on board. I have no more to add to this letter, save to wish you success on this occasion as I do with unfeigned zeal, and add my best compliments to Mrs. Skene and all the youngsters.—Believe me, most truly and joyfully yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

Bring that Count.

I shall get a frank.

We have been plagued with strolling foreigners—a Venetian Count Rivadun, or some such name, who contrived last night to get a little torticular, which was funny enough.

Sir William Arbuthnot was Secretary to the Board of Trustees.<sup>1</sup> Upon his death I had applied

<sup>1</sup> Which had powers analogous to those of the Local Government Board.

to become his successor in office, and was successful, all the members of the Board, with scarcely any exception, having given my application the most gratifying reception. To show the acuteness of Sir Walter's judgment of character, our intimate acquaintance and early associate, Sir William Rae, was one of those most unexpected exceptions, acting, in his official capacity of Lord Advocate, upon the preposterous and time-honoured principle which some officials entertain, of aiming at the reputation of stern integrity by resisting the advancement of a friend because he is a friend, however otherwise adequate to the duties of the situation he may be aiming to attain. It was a degree of pusillanimity and littleness of mind which the straightforward honesty of Sir Walter's disposition led him to hold in great contempt. He had himself met with it from the same quarter in the resistance to the advancement of his own son-in-law, Mr. Lockhart, a man of first-rate abilities and attention to business, for whom Sir Walter had asked of his old friend the situation of Deputy-Advocate, but after much demonstration of good-will and shuffling, it received the go-by, and was the occasion of Mr. Lockhart quitting the Scottish Bar and establishing himself in England in literary engagements. As Sir Walter was by this means deprived of his assistance and society, which he much valued, and also had his favourite daughter removed to a great distance from him at a time

when he stood much in need of her soothing care, it is not to be wondered that he felt severely the slight which had been put upon his friendship from a quarter whence it had been least expected.

The present occasion, I am sorry to say, afforded me a parallel experience of how little we are justified in trusting to the appearance of friendship until it has passed the ordeal of proof. Hurt as Sir Walter was in his own case and also in mine, with him it left no rancour behind, and I can conscientiously say that I experience none, and I should be happy to have an opportunity of requiting towards my old associate good for evil.

ABBOTSFORD, 24th October 1830.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have paused a day on your letter merely to consider whether I could meet your wishes by an express application to Sir Edward Paget, to whom I am totally unknown, or at least I cannot suppose myself otherwise with[out] exhibiting a culpable degree of vanity. It occurs to me that your point will be as likely to be gained so far as I am concerned by the present letter to Colonel MacDonnell,<sup>1</sup> which I enclose. If Sir Edward wishes to be kind or civil to me, it can only be as a man of letters, and it must be nearly the same whether I write to him directly or express my wishes and feelings otherwise, leaving them to go for what they may be worth. This gets over the extreme difficulty which I find in ventur[ing] to *afficher* my[self] as

<sup>1</sup> Who held the gate at Hougomont. It was he who, when Landseer applied for leave to paint him, replied, 'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?'

a person entitled, contrary to the usual courtesies of life, to ask favours of entire strangers, and you must be sensible that a direct letter to Sir Edward would express no less. We are favoured with a visit from Lady Wellesley, who is looking unwell. Love to the Lady and fireside. This must go a double letter, for our members are off in different directions. All here salute you.—Most truly yours,  
WALTER SCOTT.

The letter alluded to had the desired effect. It was, as intended, communicated to Sir Edward Paget, then Governor of Sandhurst College, and produced a kind answer in which he expressed much pleasure in having it in his power to forward any object in which Sir Walter Scott took an interest. It was the admission of my youngest son, then in the army, to the senior class of that establishment, and it was freely promised so soon as a vacancy occurred and he was disposed to join. My son having been sent with his regiment upon foreign service never had an opportunity of availing himself of the offer.

124 PRINCES STREET, 6th December 1830.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I fear MacDonnell's talisman of 'One word from you, Mr. Dean,' is going to better our young soldier no more than I suspect, having no title, God knows, to an 'open Sesame' at Sandhurst. I am writing, or printing rather, a ghost trial (a curious story every way). As the scene lies in your country in Invercauld's district, as I take it, I will be obliged to you for a word or two of geography respecting the Hill

of Christie where the murder was committed. I have got the Duke of Buccleuch to enter upon the Cartulary of Melrose, a great hit for the Club. I hope Thomson will not sleep on it.—Yours in haste,

WALTER SCOTT.

The first part of this letter refers to the successful application to Sir Edward Paget for the admission of my son to Sandhurst College. The trial is that of Clerk and Macdonald, presented by Sir Walter to the Bannatyne Club. Being well acquainted with the scene of that tragical story, I was able to furnish him with all the topographical notices required. *The Cartulary of Melrose* was the Duke of Buccleuch's contribution to the Bannatyne Club.

ABBOTSFORD, 16th January 1831.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I have had no very pleasant news to send you, as I know it will give Mrs. Skene and you pain to know that I am suffering under the encroachment of a hundred little ailments which have greatly encroached in upon the custom of the exercise which I used to take. On this I could say much, but it is better to leave alone what may be said with painful feeling and you would be vexed with reading.

One thing I will put to rights with all others respecting my little personal affairs. I am putting [*sic*] this house with what it contains, and as Walter will probably be anxious to have a remnant of my better days, I intend to beg you and my dear Mrs. Skene's acceptance of a legacy of £105, to have it copied by such an artist as you

shall approve of, to supply the blank which must then be made on your hospitable wall with the shadow of a shade. If an opportunity should occur of copying the picture to your mind, I will be happy to have the copy as soon as possible. You must not think that I am nervous or foolishly apprehensive that I take these precautions. They are necessary and right, and if one puts off too long, we sometimes are unfit for the task when we desire to take it up. My children will be in their own right indifferent wealthy, and are in no chance of feeling any inconvenience from such a bequest.

I beg to introduce a literary man of great merit who might be called James of that ilk, since he is James of James'. I have promised him that you will procure him admission to the Museum of the Antiquaries. His wife is with him, whose maiden name chances oddly enough to be Thomas. She is a ladylike person. They have been long abroad. If you show them any petty kindness it will be gratefully felt, and well bestown, and I think you will like them.

At the next election I would like to be useful to Sir John if he stands, serving him to whom I reckon myself particularly obliged. I would assist my neighbour Alexander Pringle, with whose family I have long had both some relationship and great, friendly intercourse. Will you, who are on the spot, tell me how the cat jumps, that is to say, apprise me how I can best carry my wishes into effect.

When the weather becomes milder I hope Mrs. Skene and you and some of the children will come out to brighten the chain of friendship with your truly faithful,

WALTER SCOTT.

So poor old Henry Mackenzie is gone.



The hand of infirmity had begun to be heavy on my poor friend, as the writing of this letter, as well as the subdued tone in which it is written, independently of the subject, shows. Some warning indications of a paralytic tendency had already announced the breaking up of his constitution. He was not a man to give way to alarm even at the palpable approach of the event which was to terminate his earthly course, but he did feel much perplexed by the singular effect of the first advances of that disease. He then occupied the house No. 6 Shandwick Place, and was not aware of any previous indisposition, but one morning, soon after breakfast, he was at his writing-table, when the servant informed him of a woman desiring to see him, having some tale of distress by which she hoped to obtain his compassion and aid;<sup>1</sup> he desired her to be admitted, but by the time she had told her story, of which he seemed afterwards to have retained but a confused recollection, he found that the power of utterance had entirely left him. He felt quite aware of where he was and what he was doing, but when he strove to answer the woman, he found himself altogether unable, and when they had gazed for some minutes in mutual astonishment at each other, he rang his bell, and when the servant came in, was unable to express what he wanted, but made a sign which satisfied them

<sup>1</sup> Miss Young of Hawick, who came on February 15th 1830 to consult Scott about a MS. memoir of her father.

that he was unwell, and the servant instantly called his daughter to attend him while he ran off for a medical man. The attack lasted about a quarter of an hour. He was bled and put to bed, and I saw him about an hour later, when he gave me the account I have just stated, adding that he strongly suspected this to be the forerunner of palsy. 'All I pray for is, that when it does come in God's good time, it may be conclusive, and not leave me a helpless imbecile, a burden to my friends, to wear out the shreds of a useless existence. I have a great apprehension of this; whether it may be a foreshadowing of the fate that awaits me, I know not. As to the crazy machine, I am indifferent where and how it may fall to pieces, were I but blessed with retaining my faculties entire till it pleases the Almighty to remove me hence.'

He never entirely recovered this first attack; it left his limbs weak, and the power in his hands was so much impaired as to affect his writing, of which the accompanying letter affords proof. He repeated his words and blurred the paper. He was recommended to observe a spare regimen in his living, and although he had always been a remarkably temperate man, yet the change affected his spirits from the entire removal of the stimulants he had been accustomed to. His bodily energies were much relaxed, and he became heavy and dull, and was never again roused to the hilarity which was natural to his disposition.

In his letter he alludes to his portrait, which had been now for several years in my possession. I had, however, anticipated his wishes with regard to it by having it copied, and the original was sent out to Abbotsford at this time. As to the kind intention he expresses of bequeathing to me a mark of his regard in his will, which he was at that time occupied in arranging, I wrote to him to say how much I felt gratified with this affectionate remembrance of our long and uninterrupted friendship, and that his bearing it in mind even in the solemn duty in which he was engaged I might well feel proud of, but that the mere testimony of his regard appearing in that record was quite sufficient, without the necessity of diverting anything whatever from the funds due to his family. At the same time he might be sure that the notice he had conveyed to me of his intention had touched me most sensibly, as well as the unfavourable account he gave of his health, which I trusted was temporary, and that the vigour of his constitution would again brace up as soon as he had doubled Cape Climacteric, which he must recollect that he had just reached.

In the state of his affairs mentioned in this letter, it afterwards appeared that Sir Walter had been a little too sanguine, and whether the intended bequest formed a part of his will or not, I was never informed, but as circumstances turned out in respect to the provision for his family, I

must have decidedly declined permitting any part, however small, to be withdrawn on my account.

Mr. James, whose acquaintance he engages me to favour, is the author of many clever and most interesting works in the walk of historical romance, and is also a most agreeable man, whom I had occasion frequently to meet afterwards.

The election he adverts to was of members of the Bannatyne Club, which, being limited in numbers, had become much in request and generally very keenly contested.

Cognisant as my constant intimacy and association with Sir Walter Scott rendered me with all the circumstances of his literary occupations, I may here note down a few reminiscences connected with that subject, chiefly with reference to the Waverley series.

The very amusing introduction to *Quentin Durward* is a somewhat embellished account (which I had happened to narrate to Sir Walter) of a visit I had paid the Marquis de Forbin at his magnificent ancient castle of La Barben in Provence, with an account of the kind and amusing reception given to me by my excellent friend the Marquis, a sadly plundered emigrant, in the château of his ancestors, the only portion of their extensive territories which had been restored to him (see vol. v. of my travelling memoranda,<sup>1</sup> whence Sir Walter also borrowed the account of the forest of Les Ardennes, of La Marck, and

<sup>1</sup> Not yet published.

various other localities for the wanderings of his hero, Quentin Durward, places with which Sir Walter himself was personally unacquainted). After having for some time dwelt on Scottish subjects in his romances, Sir Walter mentioned to me that he was contemplating an English ground for his next tale, of which he stated the proposed outline. I happened to observe that I thought a new and very interesting subject might be extracted from the barbarous treatment to which the Jewish race had been subjected in England and other Christian countries. I did not allude to the atrocities of King John, but to a later period of their existence in England as an oppressed people, when the oppression was somewhat less revolting. He swung about the room in silence for a space, as was his usual habit when reflecting, and then, with a slap on my shoulder, pronounced the idea not a bad one, and *Ivanhoe* was the result. I was abroad during the publication of several of the later novels, having gone to reside in the South of France on account of Mrs. Skene's health.

In *The Antiquary*, the encounter with the Phocas or seals there described is my friend's edition of an adventure which actually happened to myself in descending into a lonely creek of the rocky shore of Kincardineshire near Dunottar Castle, where I unexpectedly found six or eight seals basking on the sunny beach; they certainly gave me determined battle as they squattered

down to the sea, launching stones at me with their fins, with greater precision and dexterity than I could have supposed possible, and paying but little regard to my missiles; had they stood their ground, my retreat would probably have become indispensable.

An old Chevalier whom I met in France gave me an interesting criticism of the *Life of Napoleon*; he was one of the very few then remaining of the ante-revolutionary savants of France, and he still retained not only his faculties, but his personal activity in full vigour. He happened to be engaged in the perusal of Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, and mentioned that he believed that there were very few now in France whose personal and minute acquaintance with the events of the Revolution and subsequent wars was as extensive as his own, or whose memory about them could be more relied upon. He therefore felt himself entitled to give a confident opinion of that work, and he said that he would do the author justice to say that the general accuracy of the statements had been a subject of admiration and surprise to him, which every page in the progress of the perusal kept alive; that with the exception of a few oversights and trifling inaccuracy of dates, he could bear testimony to the historical truth of the work and the singular impartiality which pervades the opinions expressed; that it was impossible not to jostle sharply against the prejudices of various classes

in the candid conduct of such a work ; the more fairly it laid open and exposed the truth, the more generally was it likely to rouse angry feelings, so multifarious had been the crimes, so unprincipled the duplicity of the temporary rulers vouchsafed to France, whom the revolutionary cauldron from time to time worked up to the surface, where for a season they occupied attention, and then boiled over. Their agents and abettors, reposing upon the oblivion of mutual forbearance in their countrymen, saw in this work their old sores most unceremoniously exposed to view. And, as for the generality of the people, they had during the progress of events been so industriously kept in ignorance of everything unfavourable to the cause that many of the facts of their own history were not only actually new to them, but being in opposition to their previously received impressions on the subject, were naturally received with doubt. It was consistent with their natural vanity that they should sturdily deny the author's accuracy, and abuse him as a detractor of French glory, and as an uncandid vaunter of the undeserved merits of his own countrymen. Where individual interest or national fame are considered the French are sometimes not very scrupulous in the means used to promote them ; accordingly in many particulars the French translation of the *Life of Napoleon* has by intentional mistranslation truckled to the vainglory of their countrymen by making the author appear to advance offensive

absurdities he never intended, which may be seen by comparing in the two those passages more particularly criticised in France. The translation makes the author, in discussing the qualifications common to the soldiery of the two countries, say 'that one Englishman can at any time beat two Frenchmen,' when the author merely says that the determined character of a British soldier will make him seldom hesitate to fight two Frenchmen, *but that he will beat them is more doubtful*. The French translation omits the latter clause of the sentence, which deprives it of any offensive application.

I was not aware till Sir Walter himself told me, that the amusing character of the old soldier Dugald Dalgetty was taken from the record of an ancestor of mine in the military annals of Holland, the General Martin Skene, who, in command of the Dutch army at the siege of Namur, was killed in forcing the passage of the river. His body floated down to the island on which he had constructed a strong fort, which still bears his name, but the euphonious taste of the Dutch does not appear to have been satisfied with the orthography of his short name, having only one 'k,' for they have added another at the end, and the fort he constructed is called *Skenke Fort* to this day.

In our frequent walks and rides together, Scott seldom failed to turn the conversation more or less directly towards the particular theme which happened at the time to occupy his attention,



with the purpose, no doubt, of sharpening his own inventive faculty, as well as of forwarding the chance of eliciting information or anecdotes connected with his subject, possessing as he did a memory almost indelible, so that the nature of the forthcoming composition was easily guessed by those familiar with his habits. I have seen almost all the manuscripts of his works, written in a small firm hand, and I do not recollect to have perceived any corrections or erasures, which was surprising considering the rapidity and tirelessness of his composition. Sickness did no doubt at times interrupt his literary industry, and on one occasion caused a lapse of some duration and great suffering, from gall-stones. I was frequently with him at Abbotsford during the progress of this malady, which ultimately confined him to bed, causing at times excessive pains, which he bore with manly fortitude and patience, showing, while thus tormented, no irritation of his habitual kind and gentle temper.

ABBOTSFORD, Sunday [*Feb.* 1831].

MY DEAR SKENE,—The snow has fallen so thick and is still falling, that I will, considering the nature of my party, rather give [up] the chance of getting back than encounter the road to-morrow, being Monday. Tuesday will, I hope, find us, or me at least, at your hospitable board, that is if Anne be fit for a guest.—Always yours  
very truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

This was the last time Sir Walter was able to

be in Edinburgh, with the exception of that melancholy transit which he made through the city, when conveyed in a state of insensibility as to where he was, from the steam-vessel in which he came from London, on his way to Abbotsford, a short time before his death. It was upon the occasion of this visit, when he remained a week in town, partly in my house and partly with Mr. Cadell, that he completed the arrangement of his family affairs, and finished the preparation of his *Romances* for the new edition. His strength was so much gone that he was not able to move about with any degree of comfort as there was a heavy storm of snow on the ground. Nevertheless he was very cheerful in the small parties of friends who met him at dinner, both in my house and Mr. Cadell's, and was exceedingly sanguine as to accomplishing ultimately the retrieval of his affairs, the new edition at that time yielding £10,000 yearly in payment of the debt. All his friends united in urging him to try the efficacy of a foreign tour, to which he became ultimately reconciled, from learning the advantage which Mr. Wilkie, the celebrated painter, had just derived from trying that scheme to restore him from a state of health that had for some time prevented him altogether from pursuing his professional occupations. The only doubt which Sir Walter had on the subject was that he did not feel it possible to give up writing, and he continued even in his journey to occupy himself in his accustomed

pursuits. 'To tell me now not to write!' he said; 'you might as well tell the kettle, when filled with water and put on a good fire, not to boil.'

ABBOTSFORD, Thursday, 30th May 1831.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I am greatly obliged for your kind trouble in getting the copy made, but remember I am the artist's debtor. You must let me know to whom and for what sum, and Mr. Cadell, who stands my paymaster on such occasions, will settle my debt as soon as he comes down. I expected him every day.

I hardly think I shall be able to come to town again, but must bid the world good-night like poor Colin,<sup>1</sup> when I enjoy almost for the first time in my life the privilege of directing my own motions. Michael Mercer, Darroch and Melrose Carrier, will call for the portrait on Wednesday or Thursday this week next—third or fourth, that is, of next June. I will take good advice on the subject of the varnish, for I do not feel myself adequate to decide a question so important. I expect to see the great landscape-painter one of these [days], who will advise me what I ought to do. Frank Grant has made a good portrait of me for Lady Ruthven, who honoured me by the expression of a wish to have one, and the addition of the two large deer-hounds has given an interest to the performance which it could hardly have gained otherways.

I must cut short, for my head does not stand writing for very long, for I still have fits of headache, which are I suppose the dregs, the reliques of my old malady, which I never expect to get free of.—I remain, with much love to Mrs. Skene and family, very much yours,                   WALTER SCOTT.

<sup>1</sup> Colin Mackenzie, James Skene's brother-in-law.

This letter was in answer to one from me, announcing the death of my brother-in-law, Mr. Colin Mackenzie, long our mutual friend, and an object of affection to all who knew him. His death created a blank in our society, which could never be supplied. He was to me an early friend, and latterly a most affectionate relative, as well as an invaluable support in everything which regarded the interest of myself or my family.

What Sir Walter alludes to in the latter part of his letter was his intention of retiring from his office as Clerk of Session, and also from the Royal Society, of which he had been for some time President. The Society requested that he would continue at the head of their body, although it might not be convenient for him to officiate any longer, and accordingly he remained President till his death.

The arrangements were made for his journey in the ensuing spring and summer, during the course of which I had frequently written to him from Perthshire, where I was then residing, but the labour of writing was often irksome to him. He expected me at Abbotsford, but I was prevented from making the journey, and the next letter I received from him, in which he gives a description of the volcanic island which had lately sprung up in the Mediterranean, was written during his voyage out. As he wished this account to be communicated to the Royal Society, I copied that

portion of his letter in order to be able to read it more easily.

The erased portion of this letter had been intended for his publisher, mentioning a work entitled *The Siege of Malta*, and his intention of preparing what he calls a 'thumping journal' of his tour. Neither of these works have yet seen the light.

My son, James Henry,<sup>1</sup> was in garrison at Malta when Sir Walter was there, and of course attended him very often. By his account it must have been delightful to see how much Sir Walter enjoyed a scene so new to him as the beautiful city of the Knights, and particularly the fine old library; but as it is to be hoped that his Journal will be given to the public we shall have his impressions from his own hand.

My son had a note from Sir Walter one morning, desiring to see him at an earlier hour than usual, and giving as his reason that he had felt so much oppressed by the number of people that generally escorted him in his walks through the town, that he wished my son to come and conduct him quietly to see the principal objects of interest, in order that he might be able to enjoy them leisurely, and without the tax of being gazed at as a lion, which was so irksome to him as to make him rather avoid sight-seeing altogether than encounter its

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards H.M. Vice-Consul at Aleppo. Author of *Frontier Lands of the Christian and the Turk*, etc., and other books on the near East.

accompaniment. In early life Sir Walter's lameness had little effect on the vigour or activity of his movements, but later in life it obliged him to use the friendly arm of a companion in addition to the support of his cane, and heavily enough he sometimes found himself obliged to lean, as my own arm could well testify.

Proceeding accordingly in this manner to various parts of the town and surrounding forts, when they came to the Church of St. John, he slipped his arm free from my son's support. He stood some time in silence at the door of the church, with his eyes cast down in that musing mood which was so much his wont, and that for so long a time, that my son, suspecting that he felt unwell, again offered his support. 'No, no, my good young friend. When I have to enter the House of God, it demands a moment's thought, and here I must enter unsupported, and so remain as best I can. When we come out I shall beg your arm again, which in the meantime will not be the worse of the respite, for an old fellow like me hangs heavy on his friends.' And so accordingly he proceeded, and enfeebled as he had now become, his progress was obviously very laborious to himself. I may remark that this mode of expressing veneration for the House of God was a very ancient one, and especially in observance among the Jews, who were not permitted in the Temple to use a staff, which they left at the door, considering that it was inde-

corous while within the Sanctuary to lean on any support save the staff of God. But to return to Sir Walter, my son being familiarly acquainted with the more remarkable monuments which decorate the chapels of the different nations of the old Knights of St. John, was surprised to find as he pointed them out in succession, the intimate knowledge Sir Walter seemed to possess of the individual history of each of the Grand Masters and distinguished knights, which he took pleasure in relating at length as they proceeded. He contemplated the effigy and its accompaniments, as if the better to imprint its appearance on his memory, perhaps with a view to future use. But the task was a long and laborious one, and although seemingly much exhausted before they had got through with it, he still refused assistance until they had recrossed the threshold of the church, when, grasping my son's arm, he leaned so heavily that his companion had some difficulty in supporting him to his hotel.

I ought also to have mentioned that before setting out on this exploratory ramble, when my son asked him where he more particularly desired to be conducted to, he had the kindness to say, 'The first place you are to take me to, is the house your father inhabited at Malta. It will do my heart good, just to see it and be able to tell him so, if it should be God's will that we meet again.' But, alas! it was not our fate ever to meet again in life.

While at Malta, Sir Walter passed a great deal of his time in the old Library of the Knights, and in fact had begun to compose a romance connected with their history, of which, without intending it, he accidentally sent me the evidence in one of the letters of our correspondence at this period. He had not perceived that a page of the sheet of paper on which he wrote to me contained a portion of the story he was engaged upon, and, the posthorn close at hand before he became aware of the mistake, he still despatched the letter, merely adding in the postscript, 'You will perceive my blunder in sending to you what was intended for a different purpose, which, however, pray keep to yourself.' As he did not live to finish this work, and no part was ever given to the public, the small fragment in my possession comes to be a curious relic, perhaps of the last literary labour on which he employed his pen.

FORT MANUEL, ISLAND OF MALTA, 23rd November 1831.

MY DEAR SKENE,<sup>1</sup>—Our habits of non-correspondence are so firmly established that it must be a matter of some consequence that sets either of us a-writing to the other must be a matter of uncommon occurrence [*sic*], and you know I must account it too valuable to be neglected when I tell you that on my part it consists in a wish to do something which may oblige our friends of the Royal Society to whom I owe so much for their long and constant indulgence. As it has been

<sup>1</sup> This letter is quoted by Lockhart, but not verbatim.



my lot to see the new volcano called Graham Island, either employed in establishing itself, or more likely in decomposing itself, and as it must be an object of much curiosity to many of our brethren, I have taken it into my head that even the very imperfect account which I can give of a matter of this extraordinary kind may be in some degree valued by and, compared to my scientific ignorance, may furnish a not entirely useless example that the King's errand may be in the Cadger's gate, or more plainly that the travels of an ignorant man may by chance convey some things of interest to a learned body. At least it will show that I was willing rather to expose myself by an attempt I am unfit for. Not being able to borrow your fingers, those of the Captain's clerk have been put in requisition for the enclosed sketch, and the notes adjoined are as accurate as can be expected from our hurried visit to Graham's Island.

You have a view of the island very much as it shows at present, but nothing is more certain than that it is on the eve of a very important change, though in what respect is doubtful. In the first place, the bulkiest portion of what is presently its highest and most conspicuous part being composed of the lightest and least adhesive, is perpetually crumbling away of itself, or if affected by the feet of occasional visitants. I saw a portion of about five or six feet in height give way under the feet of one of our companions in the very ridge of the southern corner, and become completely annihilated, giving us some anxiety for the fate of our friend, till the dust and confusion of the dispersed pinnacle had subsided. You know my old talents for horsemanship. Find[ing] the earth or what seemed a substitute for it, sunk at every step up to the knee and

made the walking of an infirm and heavy man nearly impossible, I mounted the shoulder of an able and willing seaman, and by dint of his exertions rode nearly to the top of the island. I would have given a great deal for you, my friend, the frequent and willing supplier of my defects, but in this journey, though undertaken late in life, I have found from the benevolence of my companions that where one man's strength was insufficient to supply my deficiencies, I had the willing aid of twenty, if it could be useful.

I have sent you one of the largest blocks of lava which I could find on the islet, though small pieces are innumerable. We found two dolphins, killed apparently by the hot temperature, and the body of a Robin-redbreast which seemingly had come off from the nearest land and starved to death on the islet where it had neither found food nor water. Such had been the fate of the first attempts to stock the islet with fish and fowl.

On the south side of the island the volcanic principle which produced the island was still apparently active. This power had raised from the bottom and added to the south side of the original cliff—the tall portion, I mean, of the island—a small bay of some extent, large enough to admit our boats, being the place marked in the draught as shaded on one side only. It is barely covered by salt water, and the operations beneath the sand seem by their perpetual ebullition to show it is still increasing. The perpetual bubbling up from the bottom produces a quantity of steam which perpetually rises all round the base of the island and surrounds it as with a cloak when seen from a distance.

Most of these appearances struck the other gentlemen, I believe, as well as myself, but a gentleman who has visited the rock repeatedly is

of opinion that the island is certainly increasing in magnitude. The decrease in height may be certainly reconciled with the increase of its more level parts and even its general appearance above water, for the ruins which crumble down from the top and like to remain at the bottom of the ridge of the rock, add to the general size of the islet [and] tend to give the ground firmness and consistence. The gales of this new-born island are anything but odoriferous. Brimstone and such are the prevailing savours to a degree almost suffocating. Every hole dug in the sand is filled with boiling water or what was nearly such, and if a ship's bottom was washed into the bay it would probably be as effectually cleansed as if it were hove down.

Our friend Mr. Walker, when First Lieutenant of the *Britannia*, was returning in that ship to England, and passed this way, when the island 'arose from out the azure main,' and received a shock probably from some part of it encountering the ship [in] its ascent, which brought all hands on deck, and passed as a shock of an earthquake which it greatly resembled. I cannot help think[ing] that the great ebullition in the bay mentioned as of boiling water, mentioned in the draught, is the remains of the original crater, now almost filled up, yet still the extraordinary operations were going on in the subterranean regions.

If you think, my dear Skene, that any of these trifling particulars concerning an interesting fact can interest their pursuits, you are free to communicate them either to the Society or to the Club as you judge most proper.

I have just seen James in full health, but he vanished like a guilty thing when, forgetting that I was a contraband commodity, I went to shake

him by the hand, which would have cost him ten days' imprisonment, I being in present in quarantine and a contraband commodity. We saw an instance of the strictness with which this law is observed. In entering the harbour a seaman was brushed from our yardarm. He swam strongly notwithstanding the fall, but the Maltese boats, of which there were several, backed from him to avoid taking him up for fear of the quarantine law, and an English boat which did take the poor man up was condemned to ten days' imprisonment to reward the benevolence of the action. It is in the capacity of quarantine prisoners that we now inhabit the decayed grandeur of a magnificent old Spanish palace, which resembles the pantaloons of the Don in his youth, a world too wide for his shrunk shanks. But you know Malta, where there is more magnificence than comfort, though we have met many friends and much kindness.

My best compliments to Mrs. Skene to whom I am bringing a fairy cup made out [of] a Nautilus shell, which was the only one I found entire on Graham's Island. The original owner had suffered shipwreck. I beg to be respectfully remembered to all friends of the Club.—Yours ever, with love to your fireside,

WALTER SCOTT.

[The situation is delightful and the weather enchanting. If climate can do me good this surely must, but as yet I cannot say much to that point. I am in my usual spirits, however, and look so well that I believe my Malta friends think I am shamming Abraham. If our *Siege of Malta* answers as I hope, the author's proceeds may enter Messrs. Coutts to assist us on our return, when I hope to bring a thumping journal with me, for, of course, we cannot expect travel-

ling to be without its]<sup>1</sup> When I see James at more leisure I will consult him on the best way of forwarding the box with the specimen, which may be broke to pieces if you think it would be more interesting. In short, it may be disposed of as will most gratify the members, and happy will I be if it can be made to interest them in any manner.

MALTA, 23rd December 1831.

MY DEAR SKENE,—I wrote to you last week some account, some little account, of the present state of the new volcano on Graham's Island, which by the last accounts has vanished altogether from the surface of the ocean, leaving not a wrack behind. I have been by accident one of the last persons whose feet have trodden its very unstable shores, which are now returned to the caves of ocean whence it came. Such at least were the latest reports, but I have no means of ascertaining the fact. It would be a choice subject for an ode to the tune of 'Polly put the Kettle on.' I suppose the former epistle and this note will reach you at once, and you will make such use of both as you think proper. Here is delightful weather and some very pleasant [people]. I have seen James repeatedly since we were liberated from quarantine.

Remember our best love to Mrs. Skene and your fireside, a convenience for which we Malta folks have no occasion. The more I see the more I am astonished at what a gorgeous generation the Order must have been of old. I never saw nor could conceive the immense richness of architectural ornament which they have lavished on their houses and even on their very fortifications.

They have suggested an improvement at

<sup>1</sup> The words [ ] erased and marked 'this written by mistake.'

Abbotsford, which I think will complete the picture in the original style. It is only a screen for the west front of the old barn, so nothing involving much expense. I must finish this letter. Trust it will reach you safely.—Yours ever,

WALTER SCOTT.

MY DEAR SKENE,<sup>1</sup>—Last night I received your kind letter of 27th December, and behold is not this the 5th of March! After long hungering and thirsting for it, it having pleased the Post Office at length to forward them to Naples by a steamboat which has been of late disused between ports.

It is pipers' news to tell of the splendid beauties of what is called the Channel of Malta, which is one of the most glorious scenes, with the assistance of the Great Mongibello, which I ever saw in my life. Certainly if landscape various as the heart of man can conceive could atone for a curious want of national character, this land has it all to show for itself, but further the deponent saith not. Their former great men of literature were indeed giants in the land, but they live less in the hearts of their countrymen than the much inferior personages of our own.

Robert Burns, Allan Ramsay even, and less men than even the last, have received fully their meed from their countrymen. I myself have every right to be grateful to my countrymen, and I will say in your ear that I have not been undeserving of good-will at their hands, and particularly those who in a matter-of-fact age enough are much acted upon by the feelings of the very imaginative one which preceded us. I hope I should not be so absurdly deaf to the voice of sober reason to anything else

<sup>1</sup> This letter is incoherent and almost undecipherable.

as I acknowledge to be in the present case. However, having made the *amende honorable*, I must proceed to news, though I have not much to tell. I admire the face of the country extremely about Naples, but, alas! I can no longer crawl up the hills on pony back, at which no man on earth would ever have defeated me, and it would be quite folly under all the circumstances to hope to acquire so much dexterity again. I can have a pony cart, and we may have a race of gigs if we wish to revive old frolics. By the way, the deuce take Ressie, how came you to stick yourself here on the other side of the Tweed and Forth and all? It was, I must say, really malice prepense.

By the bye, my efforts to furnish two very so-so novels have proved, as has sometimes happened to me, so much better than they deserve that I verily believe that they will in the course of this year pay off all the painful and burdensome debt of six years gone. It amounts to no less than £120,000 stg., and makes me once more a wealthy man, which though I flatter myself I did hope I bore well, yet I am as well pleased to be tried in another way. This most joyful piece of intelligence arrived, as I may say, at the very dead of night, as I may say allegorically. When I came to Malta I had only a credit for £500, which circumstances had considerably reduced, so when I saw myself rather shut up, never knowing what might have happened to stop my resources, I felt very uneasy. Luckily my son, to whom there had occurred the possibility of a short commons in such times, had ample supplies for Malta, and even for Naples. To be sure, Cadell was not like to have played me such a trick, but 'burn bairn'—In short, that did not prevent my supposing it had actually happened. I do not know what

I could have done. You may [be sure] Cadell had no scarcity of letters, but unluckily responses, accompts, and I wot not what were sent to Malta, and unhappily went a great way round. When I came to Naples, where I made next to sure of letter and money, the man scarce looked at the letters and said there was no letter for me. Charles came in, and having occasion himself *en fait d'argent* sometimes to complain of his Sicilian Majesty's Post Office—— But I was so humbled that when the man of letters spelled out a little oblong letter in Cadell's hand, stating the happy general result, all is well. Accounts sent to Malta. Meantime am ready to answer for £2000 or more if you may have occasion. That you may have no trouble I will remit it to Coutts through Sir William Forbes & Coy. I could not even have had the sad remedy of self-destruction if I had [been] desperate enough to have taken it, for I had paid to the extent of £20,000, which would have been lost to that extent if I had been guilty of a crime of that nature. So I had nothing to do but to compose myself, and readily found a banker to give me what cash I wanted. So my straits were at an end; for the fright, which I promise you was not a little one, . . .<sup>1</sup>

I saw James after I got out of the quarantine. He was very kind and offered us all manner of service. I found a very fine old Churchman who had fought at the head of the inhabitants against the French when they began to plunder the churches, which are the most splendid I have seen anywhere. The prelate is now Bishop of Malta. He has got a journal of the siege, which he is well-nigh willing to publish. He is a fine-looking man. I pressed him to allow me to publish it for the

<sup>1</sup> The next sentence is incoherent, and shows painfully how near the brain was to its eclipse.



benefit of the poor of the diocese, and would become bound to make them £500 at least, but the bishop is a very modest man, although almost I had persuaded.

Miss Skene came to Naples yesterday and was so good [as] to look in upon us at tea-time, and will take care to be of service to you if we can. I think of undertaking a voyage to the Ionian Islands. Sir Frederick and Lady Adam are very pressing, and the weather at this time of year is excellent and very healthy. I can scarcely propose resistance [breaks off].

This letter closes my correspondence with Sir Walter Scott. It was the last I received from him, and I have reason to think that it was among the last he ever wrote, as the fatal complaint which deprived him of the use of his hands, and which soon led him to the grave, overtook him but a short time after the date of this letter, which, although he omitted to insert it, and even forgot to subscribe his name, was written on the 5th March 1832, and from Naples.

Although Sir Walter's hand had now become exceedingly illegible, this letter strongly evinces the accuracy and even liveliness of his ideas at a time when he was so rapidly approaching his end, and in point of subject it is interesting, as well as displaying the usual playfulness of his epistolary style. He mentions his having finished two novels which yet remain to be brought to light, as also the journal of the Bishop Militant which he mentions. The voyage to the

Ionian Islands did not take place, as he began to get impatient to set out on his homeward course. I understand that by the time he had reached Rome the state of his health did not permit of his enjoying the wonders of that city, for he became impatient to reach home, having most probably experienced some premonitions of the catastrophe which finally overtook him in proceeding down the Rhine by steamboat. The remainder of his journey, as may be well supposed, was most anxious and painful to his son and daughter who attended him, and full of impatience to himself, from the eagerness of his desire to reach home in life, which was finally accomplished. He was conscious of the blessing of being permitted again to see his home, and the adjoining letter from Mr. Lockhart conveyed to me the last communication I was ever to receive from my friend.

ABBOTSFORD, *12th July 1832.*

MY DEAR SKENE,—Sir W. Scott has stood his journey pretty well, and is to-day more like himself than he has been since his last attack. He has evidently derived comfort from finding himself at home, and if he goes on as he has begun, we may yet, I would fain hope, see him able to enjoy something of the society of his friends. I told him I was going to write to you, and he desired his best regards, saying, ‘As soon as they think I ought to see any one, I must have Skene out for a day or two.’—Yours truly,

J. G. LOCKHART.

Thorwaldsen, the celebrated sculptor, thus described to me Sir Walter Scott's visit to Rome a short time before his death. These two renowned characters, it appears, had often expressed their anxious wish to have an opportunity of meeting, and when they did thus meet, both in the wane of their illustrious course, having in their respective external appearances, as well as in their celebrity and unassuming modesty, many remarkable traits of resemblance—both tall, dignified-looking men, bent with age, both having a profusion of grey hair encircling their marked features, with heavily shaded eyes—they found that, though by reputation so intimately acquainted with each other, and impressed with mutual regard, they were altogether devoid of any common language of communication. Gazing at each other for a moment in silence, with inexpressible satisfaction beaming in their countenances, they embraced each other with fervour, repeatedly shook each other cordially by the hand, their eyes brightening in silent sympathy, and after a short time of mutual contemplation without a word said, repeated their embrace and parted, my poor friend to hasten to his premature tomb, and the other to repose a few years longer from the labour of his active life.

Thorwaldsen mentioned the circumstance with tears in his eyes, saying that it was the most remarkable and beautifully interesting interview he had ever enjoyed, and although it had been

his proud fate, during a long life, to have been presented to almost all the illustrious characters of his day, the impression of his meeting with Scott dwelt more deeply in his mind than any other.

KAESIDE, 15th August 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,—I would immediately have answered your letter, which I received a week ago, but having called at Abbotsford just when I got it, and telling the ladies your anxiety to know about Sir Walter, Miss Scott said she ought to have written to Mrs. Skene, and would immediately do so, as it would do her good, she said. So I thought I would wait for a few days.

But, alas! I have nothing to say but what is very painful, and although you seem to me to have a right to know all about him, yet I feel it impossible to give you an account in detail.

Your friend is helpless, and requires to be attended in every respect as an infant of six months old. Of his powerful mind, which, as it were, shone over the civilised world, there remains only a pale and uncertain glimmering. Sometimes, though but rarely, it blazes out for a brief moment, and this makes the melancholy sight more hard to bear.

They tell me he is seldom conscious, and he complains greatly and speaks much, and he is generally extremely restless and impatient, and, they tell me, irritable. I have rarely seen him show such symptoms, for he always knows me, seems relieved to see me, holds out his hand and grasps mine, and looks in my face, and always attempts to speak. Often he seems anxious to inquire about or to tell me something, but he rarely makes out a sentence, and when he finds he

cannot make himself understood, he lets his head sink and he remains silent until I offer to go away, when he holds my hand firmly and sometimes entreats me not to go yet! I cannot well picture to myself any scene more distressing. From what I have heard and from anything I have seen of the wanderings of his mind—for his imagination (as I think) is, as heretofore, never at rest—he seems more like one in a brain-fever than anything else. He has evidently the power of rousing and checking himself, but the effort seems painful. He often cries out of pain, but when questioned he says he feels none.

He is often out of bed in a Bath-chair, and has several times been out on the grass before the house. He always, as I think, understands what I say.

All this is too distressing; perhaps I need not have said so much—for it must have given you much pain. Should you favour me with a line to ask me, I will from time to time let you know. —With high esteem and regards, I am, sir, yours very truly

W. LAIDLAW.

Sir Walter is certainly thinner, even greatly so, than he was; but I think it is from the effect of his regimen. His pulse is very various. One day I felt it 120 and rather feeble. Last night he rested better than during the two previous ones. He had got a large dose of Hyoscyamus. The ladies were sinking from close and harassing attendance, but I spoke to Clarkson, and he prevailed on them to give it up.

KAESIDE, Sunday Even., 10 o'clock.

MY DEAR SIR,—Although you have not asked me, I write this as it were to prepare you for what is next to come.

It is most probable that your illustrious friend will not survive over to-morrow. Gangrene commenced more than twenty-four hours ago.

The back became excoriated. Dr. Ross, who has long been his physician in Edinburgh, was upon a visit to his brother, Col. Ross, at Gattonside House, and has attended him for nearly the last week.

Mr. Lockhart has written for Major Scott and Charles.

When the end comes that we have *hoped for*, it often comes to surprise us.—I am, with high regard and esteem, your most obedient servant,

W. LAIDLAW.

Mr. William Laidlaw, the writer of the above letters, was a sincere and attached friend of Sir Walter Scott. He had long had the charge of his property at Abbotsford, and was a man of very superior acquirements and merit, whose society was always most deservedly cherished by Sir Walter. His letters to me upon this occasion need no comment. They were speedily followed by the intimation of my friend's death.

ABBOTSFORD, 21st September 1832.

DEAR MR. SKENE,—Your old friend, my poor father, expired here to-day at 1 P.M.

The funeral will take place at one o'clock on Wednesday next, when your company is requested.  
—Very faithfully yours, CHARLES SCOTT.

We may truly apply to the fate of Sir Walter Scott the words of the biographer of Wicklyff:

‘Thus prematurely was terminated the career

of this extraordinary man. His days were not extended to the length usually allotted to our species. Ten more years of vigorous exertion might reasonably have been expected from the virtuous and temperate habits of his exemplary life, but the earthly tenement was probably worn out by the intense and fervid energy of the spirit within; and if his mortal existence be measured by the amount of his labours and achievements, he must appear to us as full of days as he was of honours.'

Slender as the foregoing correspondence is, it would be sufficient, were nothing else in existence, to show the very amiable character of the man, and the singular stability of that character under all the vicissitudes and assaults to which its steadiness was exposed. But his disposition was habitually and imperturbably of that modest and unpretending tone that seemed to be proof against the allurements of applause, and the result of my knowledge of his character was such that I do most conscientiously consider it as standing above the power of a flattered portraiture, were I capable of drawing it.

The only apprehension I ever heard him express as connected with his death, and it was an idea which often disturbed his thoughts, was the dread that his body would survive his mind, and that a second childhood would overtake him. He seemed quite aware that he was not destined to be an old man, and a consciousness of a constitu-

tional tendency to palsy led to the apprehension of the event which actually befell him, and the latter term of his life, as was so feelingly described by Mr. Laidlaw, was that of utter helplessness both of body and mind, evincing occasionally a momentary gleam of reason, seldom lasting beyond the utterance of one sane thought, and then instantly again subsiding into the vague and meaningless wanderings to which he gave utterance.

During his last days, he repeatedly beckoned to his son-in-law as if anxious to make some communication, but the consciousness had always passed before Mr. Lockhart could reach him, so that his object was never attained. It probably had reference to the patrimonial affairs of his family, for his literary arrangements had been some time before settled to his satisfaction, and, as appears from his letter to me from Naples, apparently to his conviction more advantageously than what ultimately turned out to be the case: as to public affairs, the unhappy tendency which they had for some time taken, had made him banish that subject from his mind in utter disgust and sorrow. Yet there did not breathe a man within these kingdoms so disinterestedly and intensely patriotic as Sir Walter Scott, in so far as patriotism consists in the love of and devotion to one's country, in anxiety for its best interests, and pure affection for one's countrymen, and not that hypocritical cant and unprincipled disguise



which had latterly begun to usurp that sacred name, and to mislead the unwary multitude to their ruin. Nothing so much embittered the closing years of his life as the waning character of the people he so much loved, and whose better features it had ever been the pleasure of his life to portray, to see them the prey of an heartless and designing faction, eagerly swallowing the poison so industriously diffused among them, as well by those who knew its virulence, as by the many unconscious and conceited tools who propagated the mischief which their honesty would have spurned, had they been clear-sighted enough to penetrate the veil under which they were led.

The last public appearance which Sir Walter made was in the County meeting at Jedburgh, where he found himself in the midst of his neighbours and acquaintances. Bent with an infirmity which seemed to have doubled his age, he rose to address the meeting, and in his usual mild and affectionate manner to offer the reasonings of his powerful mind, the conclusions of his acute discernment and experience, and the advice of a pure and virtuous heart. Then, for the first time in his life, he was insulted by the hissings and hootings of a set of miscreants brought there for that purpose. There sat there men claiming public esteem, calling themselves Sir Walter's friends, yet not a voice was raised to cry 'Shame.' So much for party! No wonder that

this scene should have rankled in a generous mind like Sir Walter's; it entirely reconciled him to the idea of going abroad to remove himself from the darkening scene and the corruption which crept like a stinking fog over the land.

On Wednesday the 25th September 1832, I proceeded to Abbotsford to accompany the remains of my departed friend to the grave. It had been the intention of the family to confine the invitations to the funeral to the relations and more particular friends, but by degrees it had been found necessary to include the whole neighbourhood, and many came unbidden, so that the multitude assembled was very great, and somewhat oppressive to the family, because it did not comprehend many residing at a greater distance whose intimacy with the deceased would have rendered their presence more acceptable. On approaching the place, every access seemed crowded with travellers bent on the same melancholy errand. I felt much affected by the lugubrious aspect of the groups of mourners gathered around that mansion where I had passed so many cheerful and happy days. The avenue and court were nearly blocked with the preparations for the ceremony about to ensue, yet the welcome of my old friend and the sound of his peculiar footfall seemed to sound in my ear as I joined the assembled crowd in the library, and heard my name announced, which used to call forth the hearty salutation of him who now lay

silent on his bier. We had a long, dreary time to wait; at length Principal Baird addressed the meeting in prayer, and pronounced a panegyric on the eminent character of Sir Walter, which seemed a severe task for his son to bear. It was beautiful to see the struggle which his manly countenance exhibited during this part of the ceremony, the powerful efforts he was making to restrain the feelings which all but mastered him, the compression of features, which instantly responded to every affecting word which dropped from the preacher's lips: it was the finest picture I ever beheld. At length the painful scene was closed, and the company proceeded to their carriages, as the distance to Dryburgh Abbey, the place of interment, was considerable. Every elevation as we passed along was crowded with the country-people, generally in mourning, both men and women. Every cottage, every house in the villages through which we passed bore some emblem of mourning—black drapery from the windows or over the doors, crape covering the signpost and boards—and the inhabitants standing in mourning at their doors gazed silently on the pageant as it moved slowly along. The inhabitants of Melrose were drawn up in mourning on the sides of the street, and stood there with their hats in their hands, and some old people were set in chairs; many were in tears: it was an uncommonly touching scene. I observed an old blind man sitting on a chair placed by the

side of the road. He also was in mourning, and he turned up his sightless countenance to the procession as it passed, and showed that tears could find their way out where no light could enter. It was upon the whole a beautiful demonstration of unbidden and unfeigned respect for the great and virtuous character which had been removed to a better world. When the coffin was removed from the hearse, the servants of the family insisted on being the only persons to bear the remains of their beloved master to the grave, which was readily acquiesced in. The pall-bearers were his two sons, Walter and Charles Scott; his son-in-law, Mr. Lockhart; his two nearest relatives, Scott of Nesbit and his brother, Scott of Raeburn; the others, also relatives, were Scott of Harden, Colonel Russell, Mr. Rutherford, and Dr. Keith. Mr. Rector Williams read the service of the English Liturgy at the grave. The grandson of the deceased, Mr. Lockhart's son, a beautiful boy of seven years old, was also there. He was his grandfather's name-son, and it was curious to observe the workings of the little fellow's mind, as his expression and attitude disclosed them, while he stood beside his father when the company were assembling in the library at Abbotsford. He was obviously at a loss to comprehend the meaning of the numerous assemblage with which the room became silently but densely crowded, the grave aspect of every one as they saluted with mute respect the different members of the family, the

stillness that pervaded the whole, interrupted only by an occasional whisper dropped in some corner. He gazed around in obvious wonder, then looked inquiringly on his father's countenance, and every now and then his hat, which he held in his hand, and which was covered with a long crape band, caught his attention, and he would turn it round and round, and gaze at the long black streamers which hung from it, then at the weepers on the sleeves of his jacket. He was quite startled when Principal Baird's sonorous voice broke suddenly upon the silence, and the agitation apparent in his uncle's countenance during this part of the ceremony fixed his gaze intently, and I observed his eyes fill, and the tears at length trickling down his cheeks seemed to the poor boy a relief. I could not but reflect how true to nature, and how beautifully his departed grandfather would have portrayed the workings of that youthful mind had it fallen under his observation, and how strikingly and graphically he would have represented the affecting scene of which I was then a witness. No wonder that the poor child was perplexed, vague as must have been his ideas about an event which occasioned so many strange proceedings, for well do I still recollect the incoherent notions which struggled in my own mind upon the first occasion when Death was palpably and practically introduced to my thoughts by the death of a sister when I myself was but a child, and the nursery-

maid had complied with my desire to look upon the inanimate form of my little playmate. It drew forth no tears, for I was incapable of understanding what had actually taken place; it was but a subject of alarm and distressing perplexity. The first thing that affected me was seeing my mother in tears, which I had never seen before or conceived possible, and this made an impression that is still vivid in my mind. I rushed out of doors in quest of a place to hide myself in, and made for the hen-house, where, climbing up into the beams of the roof, I found means to ensconce myself in a corner, where I remained the whole day, weeping because I had seen the distressing spectacle of my mother in tears, and not because I had gazed upon the lifeless body of my poor sister, for that circumstance conveyed to me no idea that she was actually gone, and that I should never see her again.

We may reason satisfactorily on the mysterious event of Death, and persuade ourselves of thoroughly understanding its actual condition and consequence; nevertheless, a great degree of uncertainty and dread must ever hang about it, at which Nature involuntarily recoils. And even upon the present occasion, when looking upon the bier which contained the mortal remains of the friend of many years, I seemed to hear the tone of his familiar voice, the tread of his step, and I had his form distinctly before me, not as in sickness, far less as in death, but in his habitual

cheerful bearing; nor could I by any effort bring my mind to be satisfied that the black case actually contained the substance of which the remembrance seemed to stand so vividly before me. The conviction of his being somewhere else, and of everything before me being an empty pageant, was so deep as to seem beyond the reach of reason, and internally to refuse concurrence or sympathy with the proceedings in which I was a partaker, and which the occasion was calculated so strongly to call forth. I sympathised most sincerely with the many struggles of poor Walter to restrain his grief within due bounds, with the alarm and vague wonder of Lockhart's little boy, with the recollections excited by the scenes in which I had passed so many happy hours, with the solemn aspect and demeanour of the venerable person who addressed the meeting, and with the deep impression it seemed to make on the multitude of strangers now crowding the apartment, which my mind could not but connect with circumstance of so different a character; but while I knew that the body of my friend lay in the adjoining room, the walls of which had so often rung with the merriment his lively conversation had excited (for the bed on which he expired had been put up in the dining-room), it seemed to refuse to connect itself with the image so indelibly impressed on my mind, or with the proceedings which were going forward. The deep impressions of the positive absence of my friend's personality,

and of his existence elsewhere in full possession of all those kindly feelings and associations with which I had been so long connected, and without which it would possess no identity, disposed my mind to refuse even to acknowledge that there lay the mortal part of poor Scott, ready dissolved to mingle with the dust and be no more seen.<sup>1</sup>

*Postscript*

(From James Skene's Journal)

ATHENS, 4th December 1841.

The sorrowful news reached us to-day of the unexpected death of my poor young friend, Charles Scott, the penult member of Sir Walter's once numerous family, whom we saw so lately, full of health and spirits, on his passage to Persia along with the Ambassador, of whose legation he formed a part. He caught the malignant fever of these unhealthy climates but a few days before the conclusion of his journey, and expired soon after reaching Teheran. He was not naturally of a good constitution, as, in fact, none of Sir Walter's family was, but when he came to see us only two months ago at Athens, I was delighted to hear him boast that he was in better health than he had ever enjoyed, and that his professional prospects had at length begun to brighten upon him. For though a young man of good talents, and most perseveringly zealous in attention to his official duties in the British Foreign Office for above fifteen years in the face of most discouraging treatment, he had, to the disgrace of our Whig rulers, been industriously kept down, and that from no fault or incapacity of his own, but from the

<sup>1</sup> It is recorded that the writer fainted at the graveside.



very reason which with honourable minds might, and would, have procured him justice, if not favour, that of his being the son of so distinguished and universally admired a character as Sir Walter Scott. But Sir Walter and his family differed from them in political sentiments, and with all the sham pretences so loudly proclaimed of that party, of joining in the public veneration for that departed genius, his son, as a Conservative, was considered a fitting object of their mean and contemptible oppression. Fully sensible of the injustice done him, he persevered in his duty without a murmur, and, in the pride of his own integrity, cautiously avoided giving any cause of complaint, but he confessed to me how bitterly galling it had been to him to see young Whiglins of not half his standing in office constantly put over his head and promoted to appointments, which were his due, by his Whig chief, Lord Palmerston, now happily dismissed from office; while he was suffered to linger on in neglect and disappointment, wasting the best years of his life in ill-requited labour and fruitless expectancy. Nor was the injury less acutely felt from the consciousness that he owed it to so mean a sense of vindictiveness against the memory of his revered father. Such is the ascendancy of party rancour over the best principles of the human mind. But poor Charles was also the brother-in-law of Mr. Lockhart, who in the *Quarterly Review* had often and successfully shown up the political conduct of my Lord Palmerston, a sin not to be forgiven, and quite justifying the visitation of the iniquity on all connected with him who might be indisposed to serve their party views.

Charles Scott was my godson, and the time seems but short since at his baptism I held up the infant who is already numbered with the

dead, and laid in that far-distant region, a stranger, where none exist to cherish the memory of the poor youth, and when now even at home so few remain of those who greeted his entrance into life with the fond sympathy so many attached friends felt for whatever interested his much-loved father. For, engaged as Sir Walter's mind was in all the fascinating pursuits of literature, always so engrossing, and with him so rapidly spreading out into the extended field of his fame, there never was a heart so bound up in domestic affections as his, so simply pure, so kind and true, and so free from every selfish thought. It was his fond ambition, which I remember well he often expressed to me, while engaged in establishing and decorating his newly acquired property in his native district, that Heaven might bless him by making him the founder of a family among his much-loved Border Scots. Having begun life on slender means and doubtful prospects, he looked forward with boundless thankfulness, as his quiver filled with a hopeful race, and his rapidly augmenting fortune kept pace with their increase, to seeing sons and daughters gathering round him, responding to his most sanguine hopes in their progress and acquirements, and, as life crept on, marrying and presenting him with grandchildren to confirm his hopes. It seems to me but the recollection of yesterday, when at Abbotsford all was prosperity, hope and joy, my ever-cheerful friend encircled by those he loved, blessed in his offspring, then stepping confidently into their stations in life, happy in the society of his choice, and the incense of public favour and admiration of his talents, as well as esteem for his character—comforts which gladdened the very atmosphere he breathed.

How changed is now the scene, and how short

the space required to dissipate all these fond anticipations, to reduce to dust the whole fabric of hopes that seemed so promising! The mansion so redolent to me of past delight and of pleasing recollections, the seat of constant welcome, of comfort, of enjoyment so unalloyed, is now in the silence of desertion, fast falling to decay. The master-spirit that animated its walls is laid low in the tomb, and even borne with sorrow to the grave to which had preceded him his wife, his favourite daughter, and even his grandchild, whose gentle nature and precocious talents had so much engaged his affection, and for whose instruction he had prepared the *Tales of a Grandfather*. His remaining daughter soon followed, and now his son, leaving but one remaining, the present Sir Walter, who has no children, and should his rather precarious constitution, exposed to the hazard of an Indian climate, give way, the grave would close on the whole family.

Since Sir Walter's death I have but once seen Abbotsford, and that when on a melancholy errand as trustee to set apart those articles more immediately associated with the memory of my departed friend for the purpose of preserving them in the mansion under the safeguard of the entail, and it is not likely that I shall ever again pass its threshold, nor do I wish to. So great a change has of late come over everything connected with my former haunts, that I seem to myself as if translated to a different sphere of being, and why should the mind linger like a restless spirit around the subjects of bygone recollections, however strong their hold on memory? As it is, it is surely for the best; these changes come as kind monitors pointing to its final, and, at my time of life, not distant close.

The following are a few reminiscences regarding

Sir Walter Scott by Mrs. Skene, with letters addressed to her by Sir Walter:—

The first time I recollect hearing of Sir Walter Scott was soon after I left the schoolroom, in October 1804, when my sister Lady Wood and I went to a review of the Yeomanry at Dalkeith. Sir Walter, not being acquainted, did not ride up to the carriage, so I did not know which was he, but each of our friends, and they were not few, as they came up to us, had some good saying of his to repeat for our entertainment. From that time I constantly heard of him, but did not meet him for a year and a half after, a few months after I was married, when I went to a Committee supper at Sir William Rae's, where he was. Of course, from that time I was in the habit of seeing him often, but it was not till the winter of 1807-1808, when we were living in Castle Street with Mrs. Skene, that I really became acquainted with him. He was then engaged in writing *Marmion* and was desirous to have some drawings made for a copy he meant to present to the Princess of Wales, which Skene undertook to do for him, and as several of the drawings were done on the pages of the book itself as they came from the printers, Sir Walter used to come in every day on his way from the Parliament House, and sit an hour with us, bringing the sheet with him. Very often he read to us the proof-sheet of other parts, which he was taking home to correct, making his remarks

upon it as he went along; telling us how he meant to alter it, if he was not quite pleased with the poetry. This, however, did not happen often, but I remember being particularly struck on one occasion by the readiness with which it was done when necessary. One day he had delighted us very much with the famous description of the Battle of Flodden, which he read to us with great animation. I see him before me at this moment as he stood in the middle of the room, partly reading, partly reciting it. After finishing, he pointed out some lines he did not like; then pacing up and down the room for a few seconds, while Skene was putting by his things to go to walk with him, he sat down at the table, and taking up the pen, he wrote the new lines, which he repeated to us, on the margin of the proof-sheet.

During the whole of this winter we were much at Sir Walter's house, often at dinner, and still oftener in the evening. On one of these occasions we were of the party when Mr. Jeffrey was invited after having published his review of *Marmion*. The party was a most amusing one; it was that of which so many absurd accounts were given afterwards. I have always looked back to the society at Sir Walter's house that winter as the most delightful I ever knew. The party at dinner seldom exceeded ten or twelve, and a few more were added during the evening. If it was small enough we returned to the dining-room to supper, when Sir Walter either read something, generally

suggested by the conversation, or told stories and talked till near twelve o'clock, when we departed. I recollect our having a most amusing discussion one night. Sir Walter had read part of *Marmion*, not then published, where the death of Constance is described. Some of the ladies pleaded for poor Constance, and there was a most animated debate, but Sir Walter was quite inexorable, and insisted on building her up. When the party in the evening was more numerous and less intimate, we supped in the drawing-room at small tables, and the conversation was, of course, more general, and if the Ballantynes were there they generally sang after supper. Our party generally consisted of Mrs. Hamilton, the authoress, Mr. and Mrs. Erskine, Miss Rutherford and the Miss Russells, Miss Skene and myself, with the addition sometimes of poor Lydia White, who spent that winter in Edinburgh, Mrs. H. Siddons, the Scotts of Harden, and Murrays of Simprin; besides these we generally met with Mr. William Clerk, Mr. Jeffrey, J. A. Murray, Professor Playfair, Mrs. Thomson, Lord Desart and his friend Mrs. Smythe, and any strangers or people of distinction who happened to be in Edinburgh; in short, the best society of all sorts was always to be met at his house, and to those who mix in the society of Edinburgh now, such evenings can only be recollected with regret that none such are now to be enjoyed; the change that has taken place in the society of Edinburgh is remarked by

every one, and the great cause seems to be that there is at present no very distinguished literary character, and that all our Scottish families who can afford it spend the winter in London, so that there is nobody entitled, either by birth, fortune, or distinguished talent, to take a decided lead in the society so as to collect together at their house talented and agreeable people or political parties. Formerly my father's house did this service to society.<sup>1</sup> No stranger came in any way distinguished for rank or talent, who did not bring an introduction to him, and at his house they were sure to meet all who were worth meeting in Scotland. At his death Sir Walter succeeded to the same sort of thing, and latterly, though in a much smaller degree, Sir John Hay; since his death the society of Edinburgh may be considered as entirely broken up.

In the course of the summer of 1808 we paid a visit to Ashestiel, the only time I ever was there while Sir Walter inhabited it, and spent a few days most agreeably, as I had never been in that part of the country before. We drove about all the forenoon, Skene and Sir Walter being generally on horseback. One day we drove to Newark Castle, and after walking about till we were tired, we all sat down on the grass, when Sir Walter recited Southey's ballad of 'Queen Orraca,' which he had heard some time before. I was so much amused by it that

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Forbes.

he repeated it every night while we remained. It was afterwards published in a collection called *The English Minstrels*, of which he sent me a copy, and on reading the ballad which I had heard so often recited, I was quite aware that, in spite of the length and of his only having heard it once, he had not made a single change. For some years after this we lived in the country and only paid occasional visits to Edinburgh. During one of these, when Napoleon had received a check in his career just before the peace of Tilsit, Sir Walter composed two songs, which I copied, and which I am sorry to say I lost along with many other things of the kind. During another of these short visits, I recollect sitting after supper at his house till two o'clock of the morning we were to leave Edinburgh, listening to his reading of part of *The Lady of the Lake*, then about to be published.

While we were living in the country, *Waverley* appeared. It was sent to us amongst other new books from the Circulating Library in Aberdeen. We read it with much delight and with many conjectures as to the author, but from the first I was convinced from an odd circumstance that it was written by Sir Walter. All the time I was reading it I could not help fancying I heard him relating it aloud in his peculiar manner, for which I could only account by supposing that he was the author, and that the turn of expression and language insensibly led me to think of him,



and recalled the sound of his voice to my recollection. As so few of his early associates who knew the circumstance remain, although it occurred before I knew him, it is perhaps worth while to mention that just as he was commencing to write *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the Yeomanry went to spend their usual yearly fortnight at Musselburgh, where Sir Walter, having met with some slight accident, was confined to the house for three or four days, during which time he wrote three Cantos of the poem, I rather think the three first, but I am not quite sure.

In 1816, we returned to reside in Edinburgh, and from that time till his death our intercourse was uninterrupted and of the most intimate kind. During the six months Sir Walter spent in town we were seldom a day without meeting, and during summer we always spent some time with him at Abbotsford, besides generally visiting him in spring or at Christmas.

The first visit we paid to Abbotsford was in July 1818, when the party consisted of the family, Miss Skene, Mrs. Morritt of Rokeby, and ourselves; with such a party, which the late Lord Somerville sometimes joined, our time passed most agreeably. One evening the conversation led to the mention of St. Mary's Loch, which I expressed a great wish to see, and, Mrs. Morritt never having been there, it was agreed we should go next morning. As it was twenty miles off, we were to set out early. Upon inquiring, it was

found that Peter, the old coachman, was ill and could not go, but as we were all unwilling to give up an expedition from which we promised ourselves so much pleasure, it was determined that Lady Scott, Miss Skene, and Anne were to go in our carriage, while Sir Walter and Mr. Morritt were to join in his landaulet, with Sophia and myself on the dickie, and Skene was to ride Walter's pony. To this arrangement I certainly owed one of the most delightful days of my life. We left Abbotsford about nine o'clock on a most beautiful summer's morning. Our way lay for some time along the banks of the Tweed, and after that we followed the course of the Yarrow to its source, where it issues from St. Mary's Loch. Every inch of the ground had its ballad and its story, with all of which Sir Walter was acquainted, and as Mr. Morritt knew most of them and had an equally good memory, if Sir Walter forgot a few lines, Mr. Morritt was sure to supply them. The last part of the way we all walked, and after wandering about the banks of the lake till we were tired, we adjourned to an old churchyard, where we spread a shepherd's plaid upon one of the table tombstones and made a most comfortable luncheon. Our horses being by this time fed and rested, we got into our carriages to return home. When the evening began to be cold, we shut up the carriage, I sitting between the gentlemen, and Sophia, then but a girl, sat on her father's knee. During the

four hours occupied in returning home Sir Walter and Mr. Morritt conversed upon every sort of subject in a manner which none but themselves would have done, and to which I wish I could do justice. They discussed all the modern poets, and finding that I had never read Wordsworth's *Excursion* and rather held his other poems cheap, they recited passage after passage for my benefit. Coleridge, Southey, Crabbe, and many others were treated in the same manner. Some parts of the ground we were passing over led to the Covenanters and Dundee, a subject about which Sir Walter was then much occupied, as he was employed upon *Old Mortality*. We had then the traditions still remaining in the country and the places named from those events, which led Mr. Morritt to the traditions and superstitions of Yorkshire and to many acute observations and anecdotes of Greece, where he had travelled. In short, it would require a memory as good as theirs to recollect a tithe of the conversation of those eight uninterrupted hours, and yet every word was worth recollecting. In returning, the postillion proposed going round by Selkirk to get fresh horses, which we did, and while we were sitting in the Inn till the carriage was ready, Sir Walter bid Sophia sing the old ballad of 'The Souters of Selkirk,' as an appropriate conclusion to the day. About nine o'clock we arrived safely at Abbotsford, having been fully twelve hours absent. At this time Sir Walter was still living

in the old farmhouse, which was very small indeed, consisting only of two small public rooms and four very small bedrooms above. This just contained his own family. Besides this he had built a kitchen and small bedroom and dressing-room in a detached building which were inhabited by Mr. Morritt and us. One morning Skene proposed to him to connect this building (afterwards called the 'Chapel Room,' I don't know why) to the house by building a small addition to the drawing-room. Sir Walter was delighted with the idea, and they set to work immediately to measure the ground and make plans which were afterwards much enlarged, but the ground-plan executed was that concocted at the first.

It is evident that from an intercourse so constant as ours and continued through so many years, it would be quite easy to fill any number of sheets with notes such as these, but as I know it has been done by another much better than I can do it, I need not waste time and paper much longer on the subject. I never had any confidential conversation with Sir Walter of a nature to be committed to paper, and as to general conversation, opinions, and remarks, unless I had written them down at the time—although I have heard many that well deserved to be preserved—I could not answer for their correctness, and thus they would lose all their value. I need only say that during the fifteen years from the time we returned to Edinburgh till his death, we had

the opportunity of meeting at his house with every person of rank or note that came to Scotland.

I shall now only mention a few instances, which I picked up in conversation, of the very happy use to which he turned every little circumstance that occurred to him. He not only never forgot anything he heard, but it was there to be made use of when he was writing his novels, and this probably gave many of his descriptions the air of truth that characterises them. As an instance, the very amusing description in the introduction to *Quentin Durward*, of the dish of spinach with the hare and hounds cut in toast upon it, I heard him give as having been prepared for himself by an old Mr. Canvon, who was his French master, and with whom he once dined. The ‘Blessed Bear’ in *Waverley* shaped like a lion he had been forced to drain to the bottom by Lord Strathmore’s Factor, the first time he visited Glamis. Another time I remember hearing him describe the death of the late Mr. Elphinstone of Glack, who dropped down in the Parliament House when Sir Walter, who was then very young, happened to be close to him, and he of course went to his assistance to try if anything could be done to save him. A very short time after *Ivanhoe* was published, I found the death of Bois-Guilbert described in the very same words he had used in describing that of Mr. Elphinstone. To these I might add many others, but I think I have written enough already.

ABBOTSFORD, 29th September 1830.

MY DEAR MRS. SKENE,—I am extremely obliged to you for informing me of the health of poor Mrs. Mackenzie, whose loss has been heavy in itself and must be very severely felt from the blank which it draws over future prospects. The family are, however, promising, dutiful and affectionate, which opens a hopeful though distant prospect for quiet so soon as the sense of affliction becomes less poignant. William Mackenzie left me this morning, though too early to put this in his pocket.

I can make nothing satisfactory out of Murray, who is the case of the horse whom one man may bring to the water, but twenty cannot compel him to drink. He objects the impossibility of finding a competent young person to execute the necessary curtailment and abridgment, the improbability of such person giving contentment to the others, and the increase of expense attached to the double task of author and editor. In short, he differs from Lockhart in the opinion that the journals might be used in the shape of his Family Library, so I fear that there is no more to be done, for Lockhart, of course, has not the means of forcing upon his bookseller anything which he does not consider as hopeful. The times are so very critical that nothing will do in literature that has not the advantage, deserved or undeserved, of a run of success, and there was never a time in my acquaintance with such things that booksellers were more unwilling to encounter expense or undertake adventures which they consider as doubtful. All this is unpleasant, but there is no help for it, it must be told. It could not be agreeable to Skene or his friends to have such an undertaking forced on the

publisher, if it were indeed possible to do so. Lockhart's natural desire to get over the obstacle has perhaps kept him too long from communicating the unpleasant fact.

Sophia and he will be here for a week or longer in case your leisure should permit you to come this way within that time, and we will be always here by ourselves. I begin to wonder how I shall do under a total alteration of habits, but if I live I have always the resource of coming to town for a few days.

I am so anxious to get my disagreeable communication over that I will not just now send it up with other matter, for I am heartily vexed and cannot mend. My love to Skene and the young family whom I conclude you will not be absent from longer than Mrs. Mackenzie will necessarily require your attendance.—Believe me, always with much respect and regard, yours most sincerely,

WALTER SCOTT.

ABBOTSFORD, Thursday.

MY DEAR MRS. SKENE,—I am sorry our good weather is beginning now you have left us. Nothing can give us more pleasure than that Kitty enjoyed and was the better for her visit. I wove your anecdote of Lord Pitsligo into the sheet you saw. I had not then got your letter, so interpreted the proverbial phrase as if it had recommended steadiness to the party you are engaged with; if a man goes to the first day of a wedding, it is unfair to blink the second.

I will soon hear from Lockhart, which I will have the honour to acquaint you with.

Kindest love to Skene and the young people.—I am, dear Mrs. Skene, always most respectfully and truly yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

EDINBURGH, Tuesday.

DEAR MRS. SKENE,—The Sisters of the Silver Cross have extended their subscription to two hundred guineas.

‘Where’er you laid a stick before,  
See ye lay ten times mair.’

I should like to call with Lady Morton betwixt four and five to see progress and will bring the motto with me.—Yours truly,

WALTER SCOTT.

Tuesday Morning.

MY DEAR MRS. SKENE,—I will be sure to see Cadell to-day and speak to him on the subject of your note; his proposal is a foolish one, for in what sense can any one subscribe a quotation, but what he wishes may perhaps be got at in some more natural manner. I have no doubt he may be in time for the second *livraison* of *Waverley* and the first of *Guy Mannering*. I do not know whether I should congratulate or condole with you on embarking in the anxieties of authorship.—Always yours most truly and respectfully,

W. S.



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